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BY

NAHUM SLOUSCHZ

PHILADELPHIA
THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY OF AMERICA
1927

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FOREWORD

The present volume is the result of ten years of travel amongst the Jews of Africa and much of study and research into their history and ethnography. Thanks to the French occupation, the second half of the last century saw the rise of a movement to revive scientific research into African history with special reference to classical antiquity and the mediaeval Berber and Arab world.

My studies having led me by chance, in 1905, to take up, as a Hebrew scholar, the history of the Jews of Morocco, under the auspices of the Scientific Mission of Morocco, I was struck by the great importance of the problem of the ethnic and historic origin of the various groups of the African Jews. Little attention had been paid to this problem, but I saw that the study of the question might well throw new light on the origins and history of Judaism throughout the whole Mediterranean basin.

On taking into consideration the conclusions reached by general African research, I realized that the special conditions peculiar to Africa, and the scarcity of documents, were sufficient to discourage the most zealous historical adventurer. I saw that only one course was open to me, i.e., to follow the example of all historians of Africa and to undertake a series of voyages across northern Africa, visiting

in person localities of historical interest and collecting historical evidence, both documentary and traditional, touching on the life and customs of the Jews of Africa.

Thanks to Professor Le Châtelier, I was enabled to satisfy my desire and, in 1906, I set out on my journey, lasting from July to November, under the auspices of the Scientific Mission of Morocco (of which he was the founder), in coöperation with the Semitic Commission of the Académie des Belles Lettres of Paris and of the Alliance Israélite.

On July 10th I set out for Tripoli, the governor general, Rejeb Pasha, having authorized me to travel through the maritime oasis of Libya and the three Jebels of the Sahara, all of such paramount interest for the historian and ethnographer. After studying the Jewish groups of Libya, I proceeded to Jerba, so rich in Jewish traditions, to Kef, in Tunis, where the Duars (encampments) of the Jewish nomads are still to be met with, to the region of the Aures, in Algeria, birthplace of the famous Queen Cahena, that African Joan of Arc, and finally to Nedroma, in Oran, the center of the legends relating to the mysterious Joshua ben Nun. A violent contagious illness, contracted during my sojourn amongst the natives, kept me in the French hospital of Tangiers, and prevented me from continuing my travels. It was not until 1908 that I returned to Africa, as a member of the expedition that Israel Zangwill had organized under the auspices of the Jewish Territorial Organization, and which, under the leadership of

the renowned savant, Professor Gregory of Glasgow, was to create a Jewish colony in Cyrenaica with the consent of the Turkish government. Thus I was given the opportunity of traversing the whole Cyrenian plateau, which, in ancient times, had been the scene of one of the most curiously interesting chapters in Jewish history.

My third visit to Africa was in 1910, when the Académie des Belles Lettres commissioned me to collect in Carthage documents relating to ancient Phoenicia. I was enabled to come into the closest contact with the Jews of Tunis, and also to deliver a series of lectures in regard to Jewish problems, which had definitely good results. Among others a lecture given before that learned society, the Institute of Carthage, gave me the opportunity to submit to public discussion the problem of the traces of Hebraic influence to be found in Carthaginian civilization. My efforts to win acceptance for my theories in Paris had brought me much disappointment, but in Tunis, heir to Carthage, I had the satisfaction of seeing my theories accepted after three months of impassioned polemics.

My stay in America (1911–1912), where I was so favorably received both by the public and by Hebrew scholars, before whom I laid, in a series of lectures, my theories and the results of my researches, provided me with the means necessary to pursue my investigations. Now, with the coöperation of the Commission Sémitique de L'Académie de Paris and of Mr. Jacob H. Schiff, to whom nothing scientific

or Jewish is foreign, and with the encouragement of the Jewish Publication Society, it was made possible for me in 1912 to enter once more upon my journeys of investigation through the whole of Morocco.

The proclamation of the French protectorate in that country, which brought about a crisis in both general and Jewish affairs, gave me the opportunity to render myself of service both to the cause of civilization and to our coreligionists who were in dire distress. My efforts along these lines were highly appreciated by that great leader and organizing genius, the resident general, General Lyautey, and brought me his permission to pursue my investigations, which I carried on until the outbreak of the world war, despite the difficulties placed in my path. I visited the coast towns of Morocco, eastern Morocco, the important central cities and, finally in 1913, I realized my dream of exploring the inaccessible region of the great Atlas, where a vigorous Jewish group has persisted through the centuries. In 1914 I returned to Morocco, having been invited by the government to give a series of lectures at the Ecole Superieure of Rabat, and after this I stayed at Mequinez until the beginning of the war. I was able to be of assistance in the first step towards the emancipation of the Jews of Morocco. In fact, it was really in my name that the government issued the first decree in their favor. In 1916 I was summoned by General Lyautey to come to Morocco, there to work out in detail a plan for the organization of the Jews of the country.

The present volume is devoted to a description of

the results of my various voyages and the conclusions I have arrived at through the study of the documents relating to the Jews of Africa, especially those manuscripts which I am now preparing with the aid of the government of Morocco. It is intended neither as a speculative work, treating of various more or less certain hypotheses, nor as a schematic historical manual, but as a popular work containing documentary evidence, facts of historical and social interest, observations on the social and religious life among the various Jewish groups of Africa, and finally certain reflections suggested by the wide difference between their manner of life and that of the modern world.

Now even Africa has come into the circle of Occidental influence. The penetration of French civilization, and the coming emancipation of our brethren in Tunis and Morocco, which will surely follow upon that of the Algerian Jews, are destined to do away with the distinctive type of African Jew. As is already the case in the larger French cities of Africa, social changes have a very far-reaching effect on the masses of the population, who quickly lose their individuality and their thousand-year-old traditions. The author ventures to think that he has done a useful service in braving the difficulties of the undertaking not purely African in their nature, and visiting the Jews of Africa before the older order had changed. In this connection M. Moise Netter, chief Rabbi of Algiers and an expert in African affairs, wrote as follows in a review of my work entitled, "Un voyage d'etudes juives en Afrique."[1]

[1] L'Union Israélite, Feb., 1910.

"At each step the reader will find himself amongst surroundings where Judaism does not at all resemble the picture which we see in Europe. The modes of thought and expression, the habits, ceremonies, usages and customs, not to speak of the superstitions, seem to us strange, deformed and primitive in the extreme, —and yet we feel that this spectacle is a manifestation of that same principle or idea which has elsewhere achieved such different and such lofty results. From this tangle of contrasts and contradictions issue the greatest difficulties of history. The most varied knowledge and the most subtle understanding are necessary to distinguish the essential from the accidental, the permanent from the transient, and to reduce everything to a common measure, to a norm which permits of proper valuation and the drawing of correct conclusions."

And the French rabbi did me the honor to say in conclusion: "No one could guide us better than M. Slouschz through the labyrinth, where one runs the risk at every step of stumbling or going astray..." However, the readers of this volume may rest assured that it is not a labyrinth of ideas or theses which I have presented to them, but a clear and distinct exposition of the results of ten years of study and research, of wandering and observation among the unknown Jews of Africa. The conclusions to which the facts set forth in this book have led me, as well as the present state of the known cities of Africa, will be treated in a volume devoted to the history of Jewish civilization in Africa.

NAHUM SLOUSCHZ

PART I

TRIPOLI

CHAPTER I

Tripoli

Of all the towns of north Africa, Tripoli of Barbary is perhaps the only one which has been able to retain its eastern coloring and has remained really African untouched by European civilization. When, in 1909, I landed in Tripoli, which was to serve me for the second time as my point of departure for the interior, this great Barbary city was still under the Ottoman domination, which had done very little to improve the place or to change it from a typical Mussulman town of the Sahara. Situated in the curve of a bay, Tripoli rises from the yellow sand-dunes in all the splendor of an Oriental city—a radiant vision. In the center looms the bulk of the massive Turkish fort or *Serail*, its base washed by the sea. Beyond the citadel, tower the minarets and cupolas of a thousand mosques, gleaming white against the green of the palms,—and over all spreads the deep blue of the African sky. From the sea it looks like a fairy city,—but a nearer view reveals the filth and squalor of the narrow streets.

Still, signs are not lacking of a more or less enlightened administration. There are several paved streets, two gardens open to the public, and other public works which the city owes to the administration of Rejeb Pasha, one of the most advanced Turks

of the ancient regime. When I was in the city, the forty or fifty thousand inhabitants included, besides the native Arabs, Berbers and Jews, numbers of Arabic speaking Maltese Christians, Greeks and, above all, Italians, who were already anticipating the Italian occupation of the country. If the town itself, with its houses, its terraced gardens, and its bazaars, differs little from the average Mussulman town, the same cannot be said of its surroundings. Although situated, like all maritime towns of the province, on the very edge of the Sahara, Tripoli is surrounded by magnificent gardens, where palms, orange trees and other plants of the Mediterranean countries flourish in abundance. Amidst these delightful gardens live the Turkish officials with their families, and the native Arab aristocracy do not particularly relish the proximity of these representatives of foreign domination.

It would be out of place in a study devoted chiefly to Jewish ethnography to enter into any detailed description of the town of Tripoli, about which a great deal has already been written. Moreover, the Jewish population of fourteen thousand offers a wealth of material in itself. As in all cities of the Orient the Jews of Tripoli have their own quarter, which goes by the name of Hara. The *Hara*, or *Hora*—a Berber word of Greek origin, meaning "segregated place" (the Arabs have connected the word with a rather uncomplimentary Arab term)—is the name commonly given to the ghettos of East Africa, that is to say, of Libya and Tunis, in contradistinction

to the word *Mellah*, which is used in Morocco. Like all the old Jewish quarters, the *Hara* of Tripoli is a labyrinth of narrow and tortuous streets,—a survival of the Mussulman middle ages which has remained unchanged either by Turkish or by modern European architectural influences. A house in the *Hara* is built in the late Moorish style, a very low building, without any windows giving on the street, so that no air ever penetrates into the interior. A wide, low door leads into the inner court, which is formed of the walls of four long, narrow rooms. Each room, which is more like a corridor, serves to house a whole family. At one end of the room there is a wooden platform, screened off by a grill, which is the "*sidda*," or bedroom. Here the entire family sleeps, stretched out on rugs or mattresses.

The well-to-do families may possess rugs, a sofa and even chairs, but the poorer families possess no furniture except mattresses stuffed with straw or with grass. The real living room is the central court; here the children play all day long, while the women work, cook, sew, gossip and quarrel. The place reeks with strange, unpleasant smells, and resounds with the strident voices of the women and the shrieking of the children.

The main article of food of these people is fruit—especially figs and olives—*cus-cus*, or farina mixed with oil, etc., and *bazin*, maize or barley made into soup with oil and red peppers. The red Libyan pepper, which is very hot and burns the mouth, is the most popular fruit amongst the peoples of the

Sahara. They eat peppers at breakfast and at every other meal, and often between meals also, much as they take the date or fig brandy of which the African Jews are so fond.

But it is in the narrow and sordid streets of the *Hara* that the misery which reigns amongst the Jews of Tripoli is most apparent. Here are swarms of half-naked children, vendors of vegetables, fish, saffron and spices, and hundreds of beggars, blind, or suffering from all sorts of loathsome diseases. The most prevalent disease is trachoma, which flourishes unchecked in this human swamp. In normal times, of the two thousand families of the *Hara*, four hundred live on public charity, whilst more than a thousand earn just enough to keep alive under the most wretched conditions.

And yet, despite all the rags and dirt and disease, what a splendid race, what vigor and beauty! Many of the women are perfectly formed, with delicate and mobile features. And the children rolling about in the mud are veritable unwashed cherubs.

Even before I learned the exact origin of the Jews of Tripoli I had ventured the opinion that physically they differ from the two great groups of Jews, the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. There is something of the desert and of the Bedouin in their flashing eyes, in the play of their muscles, in their sternly chiselled features.

The more affluent Jews carry on business in the *suqs*, and often live outside the *Hara*, amongst the Arabs or the Europeans. The Jews wear a distinctive

dress, a shirt reaching down to the knees, and above it a broad vest of silk or of cloth, trimmed with cloth-covered buttons. The trousers are wide, after the Turkish fashion, and over all is thrown a *haique* or *bournous*. The *tarbush* (*calotte*) is either flat or rounded, and ornamented with a tassel. The women wear very wide trousers, and over these they drape folds of material; on their heads they wear gaily-colored scarfs or handkerchiefs; in fact, they dress more or less like the Arab women.

Hardly one tenth of the Jews live under decent conditions. The ones who do are the merchants and certain artisans who work in the *suq*. The only ones who might be called rich are those who used to carry on a caravan trade with the Sahara. Since the occupation of Tunis in 1882 and the revolt of the Sudan in 1885, the trade in ivory and ostrich feathers has been diverted from Tripoli to Tunis and Egypt. For this reason many of the merchants of Tripoli have emigrated to these countries, and today may be met with, from Khartum to the Sudan. In 1906 there were only eight houses in Tripoli doing a trade with the Sudan, and by 1909 there were even fewer. About one hundred families make a living by cleaning and dyeing ostrich feathers, but in 1907 I found nearly four hundred girls, who were in this trade, out of work.

Several families have made fortunes in alfa, a desert plant of which paper is made. One firm, the house of Nahum, has its own boats for the transportation of this merchandise to England.

The majority of the Jewish merchants do their business in the *suq*—market-place—which has distinct divisions for each sort of merchandise? The most attractive section is the *Suq-el-Turk*, which is occupied by Jewish, Greek, Maltese and Levantine merchants. The booths are laden with glowing rugs, bright-colored stuffs from Smyrna, all manner of perfumes and many another luxury of the East.

The *Suq-el-Mara*, which is devoted exclusively to the sale of silks, is occupied by Jews only. The fifty merchants who make up this section are really well-to-do. In the *Suq-el-Ettarin*, or spice market, the Jewish merchants are in the majority. Generally speaking, the Jewish merchant of Tripoli enjoys an unchallenged reputation for honesty and uprightness in his dealings.

The Jewish artisans are very numerous, but their activities are limited to certain occupations. Amongst them are tailors, embroiderers, cobblers, goldsmiths, and in Amrus, which is not far from Tripoli, there is a large group of blacksmiths. The Jewish tailors and embroiderers take a distinct pride in their work, and have artistic traditions going back to the art of the ancient Orient. They fashion mantles or *bournous* of silk, embroidered with silver and gold, which are the delight of the petty princes of the Sudan. The goldsmiths also possess true artistic ability. They make all sorts of trinkets and ornaments to be sold among the people of the Sahara and the Sudan.

In recent years many of the trades encouraged by the Alliance Israélite have penetrated into the *Hara*,

but the general misery has not been lessened to any appreciable degree. The problem of relieving the hopeless struggle for existence in the *Hara* is greatly increased by the obstinate refusal of the Jew of Tripoli to emigrate. Deeply attached to the place of his birth, he prefers the most abject poverty to expatriation.

In addition to their efforts to ameliorate social and hygienic conditions among the Jews of Tripoli, the Alliance Israélite conducts in the *Hara* two schools which it established about thirty years ago; and through these it endeavors to bring some conception of modern civilization to the young Jews of the place. The Talmud Torah, housed in a new building given by the family Nahum, is also conducted in a modern spirit. Here eight classes meet, and are instructed in the Bible by more efficient methods than are employed anywhere else in the Orient.

But in the squalid surroundings among which most of the young people live, it is inevitable that low intellectual and moral standards should prevail. The mass of the people are backward and ignorant. The only activity of the elder people, outside of the work by which they earn a precarious livelihood, consists in the reading of the Zohar and the observance of frequent fast days, and the spare time of the younger generation is spent in gambling and gossiping. Those employed as bootblacks and guides have a particularly evil reputation.

Under the Turkish regime all attempts to organize the community have been fruitless, although the

governor general Rejeb Pasha has always been friendly in his attitude to the Jewish people and ready to lend his support to the Alliance Israélite.

It must not be thought, however, that the Jewish community of Tripoli is altogether lacking in men of public spirit. The most notable of these perhaps are the Nahums and the Hassans, Mayer Levi, the director of schools, Victor Arbib and his wife, Guetta, Jacob Effendi Krieger, dragoman to the governor. In 1906 Tripoli had the following rabbis: Hisqui Sabetai of Palestine, the *Haham Bashi;* the *dayyanim* rabbi David Rubin, rabbi Abraham Arbib, rabbi Rahamim Habib, rabbi Shmos Jerbi, rabbi Benzion Teshuba, rabbi Saul Adadi. The principals of the Talmud Torah were rabbis Saul Adad and Zion Zeror.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF TRIPOLI

There have been Jews in the town of Tripoli from the earliest times, perhaps even from the period of Phoenician colonization. It is certain that in the fourth century the town boasted rabbis well versed in Hebrew, for St. Augustine relates the following episode (Epistolae 71, 3–5): When the Book of Jonah, in the Vulgate of St. Jerome, was introduced for the first time into the town of Oea (Tripoli), the Bishop of the place commanded that it should be recited in the local church. It chanced, however, that one verse of the prophetic book, which was very popular amongst the Christians, was given a different interpretation in the Vulgate than in the Septuagint, and this discrepancy did not fail to anger the faithful. The Bishop carried the dispute to the Jews, who, following the Hebrew text, upheld the version of the Septuagint. This is direct testimony that the Jews of ancient Africa held to their Hebrew text. Although, unfortunately, we know very little about these Jews, it is certain that, during the centuries, the Jewish population of Tripoli many times overflowed into the towns of Libya. It is on the outskirts of the oasis of Tripoli that one of the most ancient rabbinic tombstones in Africa has been found: it is now in the possession of Rabbi Benzion Teshuba.

The text follows (See Slouschz, Un Voyage d'Etudes Juives en Afrique):

This is the tomb of Rabbi Jesse, son	1 זה הקבר לרבי ישי בן
of Jacob, who died in the month of	2 יעקב הנפטר בחדש
Adar II, four	3 אדר שני ארבעת
thousand and seven hundred	4 אלפים ושבע מאות
and twenty-three years	5 ועשרים ושלש שנה

The year mentioned, 4723, is 963 C. E.

During the invasion of the Almohades (about 1150), which put an end to the existence of most of the African Jewish communities, the Jews of Tripoli had to endure terrible sufferings.

"I turn towards Tripoli," cries a poet of that day, "for that it is grievously afflicted."[2]

Benjamin of Tudela, in his book of travels, makes no mention of the town of Tripoli. In spite of this omission, the Teshubot (responsa) of Rabbi Simon ben Zemah and of S. Ben Sheshet, give irrefutable evidence that when the rabbis, fleeing from the Spanish persecutions of 1391, took refuge in Africa and there revived the study of the Talmud, Tripoli possessed a community and more than one rabbi.[3] In the fourteenth century the town was taken and then lost again by the Genoese. At the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain (i. e., about 1500), it held

[2] Elegy of Ibn Ezra, which we give in full at the end of Part II, p. 221.

[3] תש' רשב"ש, § 576; תש' רשב"ץ, § 50.

eight hundred Jewish families, among whom were rabbis and scholars.[4] When the Spaniards, after seizing Jerba, took possession of Tripoli (1510), they persecuted the Jewish community unmercifully. Many Jews were killed and many imprisoned.[5] The prisoners were ransomed by the Jews of Genoa, but they never set eyes again upon their native land. Until 1559 there was no respite. Charles the Fifth made a gift of the town to the Knights of Malta, who were unable, however, to defend it against Barbarossa, the Turkish pirate. There were only forty Jewish families in the place when the Turks captured it, and even those came from Jado, in the heart of the Jebel Nefussa. The persistence of the tradition which connects the Jews of Tripoli with the desert is confirmed, and the absence of any trace of the ancient *Hara* is explained by the ethnic names which the present-day Jews of that town bear, and which in most cases have reference to the sites of ancient Jewish settlements in the Jebel Nefussa. Just as in the Sahara, the race of Cohen and Levi is never found amongst the old families, while names of Spanish and Italian origin are rare.

The astonishing ignorance of the Jews of Tripoli in matters concerning Judaism is indicated in the Azulai bibliography[6] (s.v., Simeon ben Labi), which is taken from a still older source. The following quo-

[4] תש' הרדב"ז, §667 (see רלב"ח, etc.).

[5] See עמק הבכא by Joseph Hacohen; Graetz, History of the Jews, Hebrew translation, VII, 15.

[6] See Slouschz, "Un Voyage d'Etudes Juives en Afrique."

tation throws considerable light on the modern history of the Jews of Tripoli.

"I have heard that Rabbi Simeon ben Labi, being on a pilgrimage to the Holy land, came, in his journeying, to the town of Tripoli, and finding there a community ignorant of the Law and even of the correct form of the prayers and blessings, judged that it would be better to give up his journey to Palestine and remain among the people, in order to familiarize them with the Law and to instruct them in the Torah and the worship of God. And thus he remained there, until he succeeded in converting them to traditional Judaism, and in spreading the knowledge of the Torah in their midst. This event took place in 5309=1549."

While in Tripoli, ben Labi composed the hymn so popular in the Orient, in praise of Rabbi Bar Yohai, as well as several other works. He was the originator of the custom found in one of the ancient synagogues, of reciting aloud the silent prayer of the eighteen benedictions, no doubt for the benefit of the illiterate who were unable to read the Hebrew. The memory of this rabbi is still vivid in Tripoli, and many miraculous deeds are attributed to him. His descendants are among the leading citizens of Tripoli. One of them is the Belgian Consul.

Simeon ben Labi, regenerator as he was of Judaism in Tripoli, was probably responsible for the cabalistic bent which has characterized the scholars of Tripoli up to the present day. The reading of the Zohar became obligatory for everyone, and the practice of

the Cabbala and belief in miracles played a great rôle in the life of the people. This spiritual state predisposed the Jews of Tripoli to become the most fervent adherents of Sabbatai Zevi. Despite the relations existing between this community and that of enlightened Genoa, it was at Tripoli that the activities of the famous Sabbatian agitator, Michael Cardoso,[7] produced the best results. Recommended to the favor of the Bey of Tripoli by the Duke of Tuscany, who was a great admirer of his medical learning, Cardoso profited by his relations with the Mussulman monarch to spread his Messianic ideas amongst the Jewish masses. He began by proclaiming himself a prophet, who had come to herald the revelation of Sabbatai Zevi, and he ended with the proclamation that he himself was the Messiah. The notables of the place were dismayed by the success of this propaganda, and by the efforts of Abraham Nunes, aided by the money which Isaac Lombroso had given for this purpose, the agitator was expelled. He returned, however, in 1664, bringing the good tidings of the Messianic deliverance, to take place in 1674, and managed to resume his propaganda with even greater success than before. He found disciples as far away as Morocco, even among the Mussulmans, and sowed broadcast the seeds of discord among the more ignorant of the Jewish masses. A local tradition has it that one of his disciples, Jacob by name, finally was converted to Islam. And the mosque of Sidi Yakub, which was built in his honor, is said

[7] Graetz, ibid., vol. VIII.

to remain a sanctuary until to-day, where Jewish women still go to pray and to light oil lamps to the memory of the Sabbatian prophet.

The Messianic deceptions did not fail to cause a reaction in favor of talmudic studies, and several rabbinic writers make their appearance again at this time. Several of the most learned rabbis of the eighteenth century came from Tripoli. Rabbi Messud Hai Rokeah (d. 1748), author of the treatise "Maaseh Rokeah," was one of them. More important for his rabbinic and literary activity was R. Abraham Halfon. He wrote a rabbinic treatise entitled "Hayye Abraham," a chronicle—the first of its kind ever written in Libya. Certain fragments of it were utilized by Mordecai Cohen, founder of an Italian family, and the ancestor of the Hebrew writer who accompanied me on my travels in the interior. I have in my possession a collection of Hebrew poems also written by this Abraham Halfon.

The following writers may also be mentioned: R. Jacob Mimun (d. 5604), author of the "Mayim Hayim";Rabbi Jacob Racca, author of the treatises "Kol Jacob," "Kishurim shel Jacob," "Orah Mishor," "Maaseh Tehillah," "Vayyaged Jacob," etc.; R. Fragi Nahum (d. 5623), author of "Mizimrat Haarez"; Rabbi Meborah Bezanes (5623), author of "Vayyaged Geber"; R. Elijah Labi (d. 5628), author of "Gedulat Eliah," "Orah Yesharim," etc.; Abraham Adadi (d. in Safed 5633), author of "Vayira Abraham"; Rabbi Hayim Hacohen of Jerba, author of numerous treatises. Among the rabbis living today, we might men-

tion Moshe Sarusi, Benzion Teshuba, Mordecai Hacohen, etc. The greater part of the books written at Tripoli are published at Leghorn, but for several years past the writers have been in the habit of having their works printed in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER III

TRIPOLI UNDER TURKISH DOMINATION

Long ago Abraham ibn Ezra gave utterance to the truth that the Ishmaelite (Mussulman) *galut* is much harder to bear than that of the Edomites (Christians). A sketch of the social and political conditions of the Jews in Tripoli during the Turkish occupation would give us a fair idea of what the Jews had to endure during the thousand years of Mussulman rule.[8]

The period of Turkish suzerainty was marked by continuous rivalry between the Bey and the officials sent from Turkey, and by the disaffection of the vassals in the interior. In addition to their sufferings from the extortion and general despotism practised by the authorities, the Jews were the first victims of every change of régime. On the other hand, the profits incidental to the piracies practised by the governments, as well as those accruing from commerce between Genoa and Tripoli in safer times and from the Caravans of the Sudan, were almost entirely monopolized by the Jews. They also had a hand in the business of ransoming Christians who had been captured by the Turks.

The modern history of Tripoli dates from the fol-

[8] See Slouschz, "La Tripolitaine sous la domination des Karamanli," Revue du Monde Musulman, 1909.

lowing episode. In 1705 the Bey of Tunis was desirous of wresting the city of Tripoli from its Turkish Pasha. All elements of the population having united to resist him, the Bey vowed to massacre every man, woman and child. Meanwhile an epidemic broke out among his troops, and the Bey was compelled to raise the siege and beat a retreat. In this deliverance the Jews saw the hand of God, and in memory of it they instituted the feast of "Purim Kedbuni," on the twenty-fourth day of *Tebet*, which they celebrate with rejoicing and the recitation of Piyyutim and the interchange of gifts.

In 1711 Karamanli, general of the cavalry, rose against the Pasha, Mohammed-Halil, had three hundred officers and government officials assassinated in an ambuscade, and proclaimed himself Bey of Tripoli. The line he founded reigned over Tripoli probably until 1835.

Under the régime of the house of Karamanli, the Jews enjoyed comparative prosperity, although documents concerning their condition are almost entirely lacking. In this connection we find in a book by an Englishman[9] the following significant account: The Pasha Ali, a man in feeble health, had at that time (about 1787) two favorites, who used to entertain him before he went to sleep—a negress and a Jewess. The latter was known as Queen Esther, because she was looked upon as the first of her nation, and because all the favors accorded by the Pasha to

[9] "Tripoli au VIII[e] Siècle," by Albert Sanine, Paris, Louis Michaud, pp. 110 and 185.

the Jews were due to her influence. She was in the habit of going from the Jewish quarter to the palace just before the Pasha's customary siesta. She was no longer young, and her embonpoint was such that five or six men always had to surround her mule to prevent her from falling off. As a rule, adds the same writer, this Esther was always present at the Pasha's table.

Her privileged position was to cost the favorite dear. On the 17th of August, 1793, when the war of succession waged by the Pasha's brothers was at its height, "there came to the English Consul a young Jew, who said that his mother, the Queen Esther, was a prisoner in the palace, and bound so tightly that the chain was cutting into her wrists and ankles, and that she was at the point of death. The Pasha demanded 120,000 francs for her release . . . . . The family agreed to this ransom, but had to wait for the money which was to arrive from Leghorn." Here the narrative comes to an end.

About 1790 Prince Yussuf Karamanli put to death one of his brothers, incited in the interior an uprising against his father and carried war and devastation throughout the country. At this juncture an adventurer by the name of Ali Agha Borghol Gurzji took advantage of these events to have the authorities at Constantinople appoint him Pasha of Tripoli. He appeared at the head of a fleet and captured the town, but the princes Karamanli entrenched themselves in the neighboring oases and resisted his domination for years. Then ensued a reign of terror, particularly

for the Jewish population, and the remembrance of that period of violence is handed down to this very day. The episodes recorded below will give some idea of the conditions prevailing at the time.

Ali Borghol established himself firmly in Tripoli, taking good care, however, to keep on good terms with all government officials. On the other hand, he oppressed the civil population mercilessly, and threw the whole town into a state of abject fear.

His greed knew no bounds. "He sucked the blood of the people." A tax of 240,000 francs was levied upon the Jews under threat of a general massacre, and he did not desist until the unfortunate victims were stripped of their last possessions. As for the Mussulmans, many were assassinated on the flimsiest pretexts, and their goods confiscated by the tyrant. Knowing that the Bey of Tunis was the active protector of the House of Karamanli, Ali Agha stopped at nothing that might infuriate his neighbor. In a letter which the Bey of Tunis addressed to the Sultan, we find the following: "Without the slightest regard to decency or the consideration due a neighbor, he set his underlings against us." But he did more: he even forced the subjects of the Bey to pay him tribute.

Among the members of the Jewish community of Tripoli, there were a number of Tunisians. Counting on help from Tunis, the Jews, enraged beyond endurance, took courage to set on foot a movement for the re-establishment of the Karamanli. In the month of August, Rahamin Barda, one of their leaders,

went to Yussuf Bey, and laid the following proposals before him: "My lord, we are mortally oppressed. We are aghast to see a strange tyrant in possession of the heritage of the house of Karamanli. . . . Are you blind to the peril that threatens? . . . How can you and your brother, instead of uniting to recover your kingdom, abandon yourselves to your fratricidal quarrels, which serve only to strengthen the tyrant and to bring death and desolation into our homes? One thing only can put an end to our misery and give us the spirit to endure until we come into our own: a reconciliation between you and your elder brother."

Yussuf was convinced by these arguments. Without losing an instant he followed the advice of the insurgents, and together with his brother raised the standard of revolt against the tyrant. From every side the natives flocked to the aid of the princes, and the army marched on Tripoli. Ali Borghol, seeing the danger, barricaded himself within the walls of Tripoli. Then commenced a siege of unparalleled horror, the gruesome incidents of which are still told with bated breath by the people of Tripoli.

The city was beleagured from all sides. It was even impossible to carry out the dead: there is within the limits of the Hara a cemetery which owes its origin to this struggle. During the Feast of Tabernacles the Jewish community was on the verge of starvation. It is said that whatever articles of food were smuggled in by the little gate of the *Funduq* were sold for their weight in gold.

The register of the Hara records that a palm-branch

and a citron were bought at 70 francs, an enormous sum for those days.

Confronted with this desperate situation, the Jews sought to create a diversion, probably thinking that the tyrant would not dare to fall foul of the Bey of Tunis. But they miscalculated sadly. The first to be charged with treason was a certain Hai Dodon, a native of Tunis, who was a maker of bullets in the arsenal. One day he stole out by the *Funduq* gate in order to obtain food for the Feast of Tabernacles. He was accused of having left the town to sell ammunition to the assailants. Ali had the man strangled, and his body hung on a wall facing the great synagogue.

The siege continued. The Pasha forced every man to devote himself entirely to the erection of fortifications. Even the school children were not exempt. The Jews were compelled to work on the Sabbath. Even Mussulmans of high rank had to submit to the general decree. To complete their misery, a far-reaching system of espionage was imposed upon the town.

It was then that another Tunisian Jew by the name of Joseph Cohen, moved by the prayers of the population, decided to take matters into his own hands. He was on friendly terms with Rachamti, the keeper of the gate; and he tried to bribe him to open the gates at night to admit the troops of the Karamanli princes. But the gate-keeper valued the favor of Ali Borghol above the friendship of the Jew. Not in vain had the tyrant labored to gain the devotion

of all who served him. Rachamti entered into negotiations, pretended to accept the offers of the Jew, and appointed a meeting place with him. Then he hastened to the palace to acquaint the tyrant with the whole affair.

Ali Borghol was incredulous at first, but when his faithful servitor volunteered to bring him, on the Saturday evening following, a note signed by Cohen, in which the latter pledged himself to pay Rachamti a considerable sum, he allowed himself to be convinced. And so, on the Saturday evening, Rachamti, faithful to his appointment, went to the house of Joseph Cohen. He found there, besides the master of the house, young Daniel Halfon, the cousin of the chronicler, Abraham Halfon, from whose manuscript Mordecai Cohen has reconstructed this narrative. For a long time the three of them discussed the details of the affair. Rachamti agreed to all the conditions, but stipulated that Joseph Cohen give him a note for the promised amount, and that furthermore this note should be endorsed by Daniel Halfon, who occupied a prominent position in the community. The note was drawn up and signed by the two Jews, but the treacherous guard took good care not to open the gates of the town to the enemy. He thought it better to carry to his master this indisputable proof of the intended betrayal.

Sunday morning Joseph Cohen and Daniel Halfon were brought before the tyrant. The former was immediately handed over to the public executioner, who was ordered to flog him in the market place

and to have him clad in a garment smeared with tar and burned alive. And the order was carried out.

As for Halfon, he was thrown into prison, his goods were confiscated, and a few days later he too was burned. Several Mussulmans, convicted of treason, were condemned to be hanged. But it was the Jews who paid most dearly for this attempt. Meanwhile the besieged found themselves without munitions. All inland routes closed to him, Ali Borghol was confronted with the necessity of sending a frigate manned by Greeks to the coast of Tunis, in order to seize by force the munitions which Hammuda Bey, the Bey of Tunis, would never have given of his own free will to the enemy of his friends, the Karamanli.

This latter exploit was to bring the tyrant into open conflict with Tunis and to cause his downfall. It was with the aid of Hammuda Bey of Tunis that the town was taken and the tyrant put to flight and forced to seek refuge in Tripoli. This was in 1793, after a reign of terror that had lasted for two years. In commemoration of this happy event, which took place on the 29th of Tebet, the Jews instituted another Purim, called "Purim Borghol." Abraham Halfon composed the Piyyutim which forms part of the service, on the 27th of Tebet.

Thus, in 1794, began the long reign of Yussuf Karamanli, who was without doubt the most energetic and constructive of the princes of his house. Yussuf Karamanli found Tripoli in a state of anarchy. Pillage and plunder were general. He succeeded in

putting an end to this state of affairs by decreeing that death should be the penalty for any act of violence. The Jewish community was put in charge of the execution of the criminals. Moreover, Yussuf Karamanli never forgot the services which the Jews had rendered to his house, nor the perils which they had braved for his sake. He took the Jews under his special protection, and to him is due in great measure the survival of Judaism in Tripoli.

In 1797, the following incident took place in the oasis of Zavia. The Jews of the district constructed a synagogue without first having asked the permission of the Bey. The fanatics denounced the community, and Yussuf profited by the occasion to impose a fine of four thousand francs on the Jews, at the same time permitting them to preserve their synagogue intact. However, the Jews, falling in with the spirit of the place, thought it best to buy themselves into the good graces of certain officials, who, for two thousand francs baksheesh, promised to have the fine repealed.

This method of settling taxes still has a wide vogue in the province. Jews and Arabs are constantly made the dupes of the lying promises of officials. In the end they are made to disburse in baksheesh about twice or three times the amount they owe in taxes, while the original is still claimed by the treasury.

The Jews paid the baksheesh. A number of other officials, jealous of the good fortune of their colleagues, did not fail to report the matter to the Bey, who flew into a terrible rage. The anger of the prince was the

cue for which the fanatics in the unruly oasis of Zavia had been waiting. The populace rose against the Hara, destroyed the synagogue, profaned the scrolls of the law, and terrorized the community. In vain did the latter lodge a complaint at Tripoli and present the legal decision which the Cadi had delivered in their favor: nobody would listen to them.

Wearying of war, the Jews of Zavia were inspired with the following idea: one fine summer day, several hundred of the individuals who made up the Hara of Zavia, assembled in the market-place and set out towards Tripoli. The caravan encamped near the palace of the governor, who was astounded to find himself surrounded by a whole community. On being advised to return to their homes, the Jews replied that they had no intention of returning to a city which had no synagogue. Moved by this energetic protest, the Bey permitted the Jews to return to their homes and to rebuild their house of worship. However, this decision seemed to give offence to the *mufti* (head priest), who had been a prime mover in the hostilities against the Jews. He lost no time in presenting himself at Tripoli, in order to protest against the favors which the Bey was lavishing upon the unbelievers, and which were "making them hold their heads so high." However, the movement threatened to spread throughout the oasis. Yussuf decided to put an end to a state of affairs which was detrimental to the treasury as well as to the Jews. With characteristic diplomacy, he pretended to yield to the importunities of the fanatics. He sent one of

his men to Zavia with orders to expel the Jews and force them to return to Tripoli. But he maintained that under such circumstances the poor Jews who were in debt to their Mussulman neighbors should be released from their obligations.

The crafty Bey knew very well that the exactions of Ali Borghol had stripped the Jews of their every possession, and it was only the capital lent them by the people and the priests of Zavia—on terms highly favorable to themselves—that enabled them to eke out a meager existence.

Thus, the decision of the Bey to release from their debts those Jews who were forced to leave Zavia, struck as much at the clergy as at the Jews themselves. This measure was an effective check on the anti-Jewish movement.

The clergy, who had interests at stake, were thus forced into the position of protectors of the Jews. And in 1799 the Bey received a memorial signed by the prominent citizens of Zavia, expressing satisfaction at the return of the Jews, without whom commerce would have come to a standstill.

This episode possesses a peculiar interest in that general conditions have changed very little in Zavia since the days of Ali Borghol. Events very similar to these resulted in the assassination of the head of the community of Zavia some ten years ago, but on this occasion it was the *mufti* himself who, having a personal interest in the affairs of the victim and being of a tolerant disposition, begged us to intercede with Rejeb Pasha on behalf of the Jews.

To return to the reign of Yussuf. In order to obtain money, the Bey hit upon the idea of turning to his own profit the plunder which came into Tripoli through piracy. In addition he determined to develop this into an industry by making his palace the base of the operations of these bands of corsairs, who had formerly worked independently.

The time was very favorable for this centralization of piracy. Europe was in the clutch of the wars let loose by the Revolution. Unceasing hostilities between France and England left the Mediterranean basin in a state of anarchy. These conditions left the pirates a free hand, and Yussuf himself was their leader.

From this resulted continual conflicts with the countries of Europe, and, later on, with the United States, the latter having refused to pay their annual tribute for the guarantee of a safe passage to American vessels in the Mediterranean. He had several American ships seized, and by his orders the flag was hauled down from the American consulates and publicly destroyed. This act of hostility did not fail to call forth energetic reprisals against the tyrant.

But America was far away, and things dragged on. It was not till 1902 that an American squadron, made up of four men-of-war, entered the roadstead of Tripoli, and bombarded the town. However, the guns of the fort opened fire with equal violence, sinking one American ship and putting the others to flight. By the beginning of 1803 another American flotilla appeared in Tripolitan waters. The Rais

Az-Zarrig succeeded in luring the large steamer Philadelphia to the pursuit of his little boat. The former, on arriving at a point known as Boghaz Agraba, struck a submerged rock and foundered. The crew escaped and the pirates plundered the ship.

The commander of the American squadron, learning of this loss, decided to strike a direct blow at Yussuf. He despatched a subordinate to Malta, with orders to seek out Ahmed Bey, the older brother of Yussuf, the rightful ruler of Tripoli.

Not daring to attack Tripoli, the Americans assembled at Derna, took possession of the city, and proclaimed Ahmed ruler, to the complete satisfaction of the native population. Seeing the way events were going, the inhabitants of Bengazi split into two hostile factions, one in favor of Yussuf, the other of Ahmed. The disaffection spread over the whole of Cyrenaica, and the efforts of the oldest son of Yussuf, whom his father had sent to Bengazi to quell the insurrection, were futile.

In the face of this menace, Yussuf appealed to the English consul and to Hussein Pasha, the Bey of Algiers, who succeeded in making peace between Yussuf and the Americans on the following conditions. The Americans consented to withdraw on condition that Yussuf should restore the prisoners and the plunder, and that he should pledge himself never to molest an American boat. Faithful to their pledge, the Americans removed Ahmed Pasha from Derna and marched him off to Egypt.[10]

[10] The cannons left by the Americans are still to be seen at Derna.

The conflict spread. One after another, England, Sardinia and finally the Kingdom of Naples took action against Tripoli in order to put an end to these acts of piracy. Bit by bit his income fell away, and Yussuf Bey, once so friendly to the Jews, sought to rehabilitate himself at their expense. The community had become very prosperous, so much so indeed that it had attracted numbers of Jews from all parts of Africa and even from Italy.

This prosperity did not tend to lessen the jealousy of the Mussulmans. And once again, in 1800, there appeared in Tripoli a fanatical *Marabut* (holy man), who inflamed the masses against the Jews, who were living so luxuriously and dressing in princely fashion. He even reprimanded the Bey in person for having admitted the Jews to equality with the Mussulmans. The effects of this propaganda were to be felt in time. In 1805 (Tammuz 1st) a large number of refugees from the massacres at Algiers streamed into Tripoli, and many Jews who had been captured by pirates and ransomed, also settled here. But matters grew worse when Yussuf, having run short of funds, began to exert pressure on the Jews. In 1829 he issued silver money alloyed with copper, at the same time ordering the Jewish money-changers to accept the new coinage at the value of pure currency. Within three years this debasement of the currency was repeated eleven times. As the European merchants, protected by their consuls, refused to accept this money, the Jewish merchants alone were affected, and they were threatened with complete financial ruin.

On the 9th of Tammuz, 1831, the following incident took place in this connection. Judah Arbib el Kushara, a Jewish fruit-dealer, was secretly apprised that on the morrow, which was a Saturday, a proclamation was to be issued by the Bey, recalling the old currency; he therefore refused to accept any payment made in the old coin. Informers carried the news of this refusal to Suleiman el-Garba, the Minister of the Treasury,—who summoned the man before him and condemned him to death. The next day the Jews, on their way to the synagogue, were brought face to face with the frightful spectacle of the poor Judah Arbib suspended by his hands on a wall opposite the synagogue—his naked body smeared with honey and preyed on by swarms of flies. There was then in Tripoli a Jew from Gibraltar by the name of Mordecai Angelo, a British subject. Having intervened on behalf of the victim without any success, he took matters into his own hands and fortifying himself, so the story goes, with a bottle of whiskey, he mounted a ladder, cut the man down, and took him to his home, more dead than alive.

In 1830, Yussuf Bey levied a tax of some 30,000 francs on the Jews and confiscated part of their goods. It is told that the saintly R. Judah Labi, who found it impossible to pay the 750 francs which fell as his share of the tax, was saved by a miracle: one of his ancestors appeared to Yussuf in a dream, and induced him to be merciful.

Terror reigned in Tripoli, and mass emigration of the Jews followed. A series of similar exactions enraged the Mussulman population. Finally, under

English pressure, the Porte decided to suppress the rule of the Bey and to bring Tripoli under direct Turkish rule. In 1853, Tripoli was placed under the rule of a Pasha whose movements were directed from Constantinople. Little by little these governors succeeded in breaking down the resistance of the peoples of the interior, and in this way direct Turkish rule was substituted for that of the native princes, vassals of the sultan.

The traveller Israel Benjamin, known as Benjamin II, visited Tripoli in 1850. He found about 1000 Jewish families, four rabbis and eight synagogues. Trade was then flourishing in the Sahara; he praises the public spirit and the charity of the rich. This condition of affairs lasted till 1885, when the conquest of Tunis by the French (1882) and the retaking of Khartum deprived Tripoli of the income which had accrued from the interchange of caravans with the Sudan.

The state of the community in 1886 is thus described in a Hebrew document.[11] There were in Tripoli at that time eighteen synagogues, eleven Yeshibot or talmudic schools and two schools of the Alliance Israélite. Eliyahu Hazan, one of the most distinguished rabbis Africa has ever had (he was later Rabbi of Alexandria), the director of the Alliance Israélite, did much for the good of the community. The community budget amounted at that time to about 50,000 francs. Apart from its dependencies Tripoli then contained some 7500 Jewish souls, Amrus 500, the oasis of Tajura 100, and Zanzur 65.

[11] כנסת ישראל, ed. S. P. Rabinovitch, vol. 2.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE OASIS OF TRIPOLI

AMRUS, THE CITY OF THE BLIND

Among the magnificent palm-groves that surround the city of Tripoli lies the residential section of the wealthier Mussulmans. Most of the rich Turks as well as several of the consuls live in the delightful oasis of Tajura, which also contains a Hara of about a hundred Jews in fairly good circumstances. Another village, that of Zanzur, has about sixty Jews, and there are several such groups in neighboring villages. But after Tripoli, the most important settlement from the Jewish viewpoint is that of Amrus.

A French traveller claims to have established the agricultural character of the Jewish population of Amrus. However, desirous of investigating for myself, I gladly accepted the invitation of M. Mayer Levi, the director of the Alliance, to accompany him on a tour of inspection. Thus, on a fine day in August a party of us set out in a carriage for the village of Amrus. Besides M. Levi and myself, there were Mlle. Barchimol, Mlle. Rabinowitz and Rabbi Magouz, the other teachers of the Alliance, and we drove for seven kilometers along the red road which connects Amrus with Tripoli, past white houses set in high-walled gardens. Then there rose into view from a forest of palms, the red walls of Amrus. A

strange town this! Before us was the town well, the meeting-place for the inhabitants of every age and condition. Beyond that was a network of mean, narrow alleys, bare and squalid.

In the foreground two streets formed a sort of bazaar, occupied chiefly by Jewish blacksmiths and, huddled about this, were groups of hovels in filthy alleys, littered with the débris of food trampled into the mud and forming a hideous swamp. And the swarming humanity about us was, sadly enough, in perfect keeping with the picture—in unwashed bands they beset us and kept pace with us. True, they were robust and well-built, fine specimens of humanity, but—and may the God of Israel pardon this offence—the one idea that possessed me was how to keep them from getting too close to me. And yet, I had a real feeling of brotherly sympathy for them. There were grimy urchins, with round copper amulets in one ear, and little brown girls, half naked, but with tin earrings ten centimeters long. Their black eyes flashed out of black circles composed of flies that clung to them without causing them any discomfort. I said that their eyes flashed, but how many of the children of Amrus there are with eyesight impaired! It was here, in Amrus, that I first saw, in all its malignancy, that terrible disease, ophthalmia, the scourge of the African Jew, caused by his disregard of even the elements of cleanliness, and by constant exposure to sand and sun. At every step one sees blind men and blind women, and nearly all the children have inflamed eyes. Blindness has become

the ordinary thing in this little village nestling among the palms. And I had hoped to find here a strong, healthy, prosperous Jewish agricultural community!

And I was doubly deluded! For there are no Jewish farmers in Amrus, as there are none along the whole coast of Africa. And that, too, although the people of Amrus are vigorous and handsome beyond the ordinary.

Tradition has it that the Jews of Amrus came from Tunis towards the end of the seventeenth century. They differ in all respects from those of Tripoli. They dress much more poorly, and their standard of living as a whole is much lower. There are a great number of beggars amongst them, but also a goodly number of workers. There are nearly forty Jewish blacksmiths in Amrus, who work in dark, gloomy shops. There the whole family is at work, husband, wife, children, grandparents, and even those who are blind take part, working the bellows and making themselves generally useful. It is rough work, and pays only twenty-five centimes a day, just enough to pay for their scanty diet of dates and figs.

The Parnas, or head of the community, a big, jovial fellow, with bare feet, met us near the synagogue with several "prominent citizens" of the place. He asked us to pay a visit to his house, which was at the edge of the palmgroves. It was cleaner than most of the other houses, and could even boast a certain degree of comfort. We entered by a sort of corridor, opening on a court, and here we saw a cow and a

donkey, and in the center, seated on straw mats, the women and children of the establishment. Two large rooms ran along the walls; the master of the house led us into the one which served the double purpose of bed-room and store-room, and which was heaped up with potatoes, with peppers and with onions. Then he presented his family, his wife, a stout woman with faded features, and his daughter, a pretty brunette, who looked frail, almost ailing, and who carried a tiny boy in her arms: "My daughter," the father announced complacently. "She has been married only two years, and this is my grandson."

"But then how old is your daughter?" I ventured.

"She will soon be fifteen," he answered. I looked with some wonderment at our host, and at the young, the pitifully young, mother, whose pallor only accentuated her tender years.

Next I observed in a corner of the court two Arabs seated on a carpet, busily emptying glass after glass of *araki* or date-brandy. This place, it appeared, was a tavern *sui generis:* for, since drink is forbidden by Mussulman law, the Arabs come amongst the Jews to do their drinking in secret; and this state of affairs, which is in more or less evidence over the whole of Africa, is on the one hand a source of illicit income to these inkeepers, and on the other hand very often serves as a pretext for the persecution of the Jews on the part of the Mussulmans.

The Sheik or Parnas had a garden attached to his house for the cultivation of vegetables, such as

peppers, onions, potatoes, melons, etc. But it was worked by a non-Jewish associate.

We returned to the synagogue, a new building, still unfinished, for lack of funds. This synagogue is celebrated throughout the country, and is held in great reverence. There we found about sixty children seated on the floor, engaged in the study of the Law. The Rabbi, a young man from Tripoli and a good Talmudist, told us that he was paid only five francs a week, and had a large family to support.

They all crowded about us. They implored us to persuade the Alliance to found a school for the eight hundred children who were in dire need of it. We were told that their ancestors had been an agricultural people, but that the Arabs had dispossessed them of their lands—thus condemning them to a life of abject poverty in that paradise of palmgroves.

CHAPTER V

THE OASIS OF ZAVIA

In the oasis along the coast to the west of Tripoli, are two Jewish groups. There is a Jewish population of about 180, mostly merchants and artisans, in the oasis of Zanzur, which is about three hours from Tripoli. Beyond, near the ruins of the ancient city of Sabrata, lie the ruins of Zorman. This was one of the many communities which suffered in the Almohad invasions of the twelfth century, and it is mentioned in the Elegy of Ibn Ezra among those lost to Judaism. To Zorman fled the fugitives from several other communities, and there, like the Jews native to the place, they were forced to live under the guise of Mussulmans. "Some went to Zorman—where they went astray. True, they escaped with their lives, but their days were spent in misery; they were tormented in mind and in soul." Thus the poet writes of Zorman.

The only Jewish group to the east of Tripoli is in the neighboring oasis of Zavia. This flourishing oasis, with its abundance of palm-trees and fruit-trees, lies close to the sea. The Jews of Zavia, of whom there are about six hundred, resemble those of the interior in both type and customs.

As there is no trace of European influence in Zavia, and as the native population, very much under the

domination of its *marabuts*, is wild and fanatical, the Jews are exposed to all sorts of petty persecutions. It was not always thus; there was a time when the Berbers were the masters of the country and the Jews were their comrades in arms.

A local Arab song tells how, one fine day, when the nomads invaded the oasis and tried to carry off the cattle, the Jews drove off the invaders and retrieved the animals. Here is the first verse of the song:

"The alarm was raised, the cattle carried off. But the Jews of Az-Zavia rushed out and got them back again."

At the end of the eighteenth century there took place, as we have recounted in the third chapter, the destruction of the synagogue of Zavia, the consequent departure of the Jews, and their triumphal return at the order of the Bey. But the day of their triumph is past. And to-day the Jews are ignorant and wretched and a prey to the fanaticism of the Arabs and the rapacity of the local officials. The ancient synagogue is in ruins, and the cemetery is used by the Arabs as a dumping-ground.

The Jews are as much to blame for this state of affairs as the natives. Quick and industrious though they are, they lack all social and communal feeling. The only man with a knowledge of Hebrew was my host, the wealthy Rabbi Susan, and he was originally from Tunis. I witnessed a quarrel between two *shohatim*, who were also teachers in the Talmud Torah, and I was amazed to find only a few hours

from Tripoli, men of religious calling totally ignorant of Hebrew. All their knowledge was gathered from the contents of a little manual on *Shehitah*, written in Arabic.

To what an extent the African Jews are lacking in the spirit of solidarity is shown by the following incident, which took place during my stay in Tripoli. On the occasion of my first meeting with the governor of Tripoli, an official telegram was brought to him, informing him of the assassination of Fergela Ashlag, President of the Jewish community of Zavia. In my presence the governor-general ordered a most rigid inquiry into the matter.

When I arrived in Zavia, I found the town in a state of the wildest excitement. The Jews came to me with the details of the murder; it had been committed, they declared, by an Arab, with the connivance of the Kaimakam (under-governor), on a Sabbath day, right in front of the synagogue. They were threatening vengeance and demanding the removal of the governor, pointing out that if he was retained in office, the Arabs would believe that the murder of a Jew could go unpunished under the Turkish régime.

It must be added that Fergela had been the richest Jew of the oasis, and that his fortune was estimated at two million francs, an enormous sum for this part of the Sahara. A large part of the oasis lands had been in his possession, and the murderer was none other than the son of a former debtor, on whose property he had foreclosed a long standing mortgage,

thus depriving him of his land. The wealth of Fergela had brought upon him the jealousy of Arab and Turk alike, and accounted also for the animosity of the local governor. But as no one has a violent prejudice against money even in this holy land of marabuts, a local oligarchy was formed, with the aid of Fergela and the Arab landowners, to offer resistance to the Turkish authorities, who were trying to turn the resources of the country to their own profit.

I received in person several members of the municipal Mussulman council, who laid the utmost stress on the necessity of punishing the assassin and of removing the Kaimakam from office. In spite of myself, I was drawn into the affair. The *mufti* (religious head) of the Arabs, who was a broadminded man and very friendly to the Jews, spoke to me of the danger that menaced all the Jews, should the Arab assassin go unpunished.

At Tripoli I had the opportunity of laying the matter before the authorities, and I received their official assurance that no Jew should suffer as a result of the affair. I learned later that the Kaimakam of Zavia was recalled and sent to Fezzan, where the climate is unbearable for Europeans.

The accounts I received of the character of Fergela were not very edifying. This Croesus of the desert, though he professed great piety, never gave any material help to his coreligionists. Despite his wealth, the ruined synagogue was never restored, the ancient cemetery was never redeemed from its

desecration, and the Talmud Torah had fallen into decay through lack of funds.

One act, however, speaks in his favor. Ignorant as he was himself, Fergela brought from Jerba a poor Talmudist and gave him his daughter for a wife, together with a rich dowry. This same Talmudist was my host, Rabbi Susan.

CHAPTER VI

THE OASIS OF THE EAST

When, in the month of July, 1906, I asked Marshal Rejeb Pasha for permission to cross the mysterious Jebel, it was the opinion of that official that I ought to start from the coast, in order not to attract the attention of the Italians, to whom the same permission had been repeatedly refused. The governor-general, who was very friendly in his attitude, had been won over for a Jewish colonization project, and he invited me to take a journey to the region of Msellata, which he considered as being best suited to colonization by Europeans. It would be necessary for me, he added, to wear a fez (red hat) in the Turkish fashion, and to travel in the rôle of a professor interested in Jewish education, in order that I might not attract too much attention on the part of the natives. I was fortunate in being able to engage the services of Rabbi Mordecai Cohen, who is something of a Hebrew scholar, and who knows the country from end to end; it was in his company that I undertook my journey across Libya.

The first town to the east of Tripoli is Homs, which is about a hundred miles from the capital. I was tempted by the idea of following the route of the sailors of old, namely, to take a swift boat, which was carrying a cargo of sugar to Homs. I paid dearly for

my whim: for three days we were exposed to the burning heat of the sun, while we waited for a favorable wind. At last, exasperated beyond endurance by the heat and the utter lack of comfort on the boat, I decided to land at a place called Aslina or Silin, near a little desert island, which goes by the name of "the Isle of Pigeons." We came upon a camp of shepherds, who offered us melons and milk. Close to a place called Tilin, where there are a number of Roman and Jewish ruins, we were able to procure asses. After marching for several hours, we passed by the imposing ruins of Lebda, the ancient Leptis Magna, a great Phoenician port, and came to the pretty little Turkish town of Homs.

There we found a few Turkish officials and soldiers, a number of Arabs and Maltese, and about five hundred Jews, all living together in perfect harmony. Quite a modern spirit prevails amongst the Jews of Homs, where a little Italian school has been conducted since 1906. Homs is the port of central Tripoli. In ancient times it was the main port used by the Phoenicians and the Romans for the entire district stretching from Msellata to Fezzan, and there is every indication that it may some day regain its former importance. At the present day a section of the Jewish population is occupied with the export of alfa, which is gathered in the interior of the country. The house of Nahum, which controls this trade, has constructed at Homs a beautiful synagogue and a Talmud Torah.

I sent the letter of introduction which I had brought

from Tripoli to Shmus Mimun, the head of the community, and embarked upon my journey in the rôle of Haham, or learned Rabbi, through a region where the knowledge of Hebrew is inseparable from the rabbinic office. It was in the house of Mimun that I was first introduced to a *shaliah*, or travelling Palestinian Rabbi, whose colleague I had become for the time being. The purpose of this holy man's visit was to collect funds for the religious institutions of Hebron—and at the same time he brought the Jews of Africa a blessing from the Holy Land.

By the time we got to Homs I was in a deplorable state from the fierce heat and from our constant diet of highly peppered food, which had scorched the skin of my tongue and lips. But I was eager to push on, and despite my condition I embarked in a small boat for the port of the oasis of Zlitin.

The Jews who worked in the alfa factory near the sea gave us a cordial welcome. From them we procured donkeys and, after riding for an hour across the dunes, we came into the shadow of the palm-groves of Zlitin. These groves number millions of trees, and yield more fruit than almost any other grove in the country. We continued our march in the direction of the houses of which we caught glimpses through the palm trees. The raucous sound of a phonograph reached our ears, and we came upon a little café where Turkish soldiers sprawled about, listening, half asleep, to the French songs being ground out on the machine. An officer glanced up at us as we passed, but he made no sign; he was prob-

ably too lazy. Some Jews came along, greeted us and invited us to their homes. But I was utterly exhausted, and hastened on to the house of Albert Bakish, the military surgeon to the Turkish garrison, whose son had been a pupil of mine at the Ecole Normale Orientale in Paris.

A curious figure, this Jewish Turkish doctor! A Sephardi, originally from Bulgaria, he left his country after its liberation, and went to study at Constantinople, where he received the degree of Doctor of Medicine, and was appointed staff doctor to the Turkish army. He married a young Ashkenazic Jewess, and would have vegetated like all Turkish army doctors, if he had not been a Bulgarian Jew, that is to say, if the spirit of revolt had not been a natural part of his make-up. The old Turkish régime was intolerable to him and he threw himself heart and soul into the Young Turk movement. He was denounced and sent to Tripoli, that equatorial Siberia to which the Turkey of Abdul Hamid had exiled the flower of its youth. Here, in black Fezzan, with its burning sands and its deadly heat, languished scores of young officers, the champions of liberty, cut off from their native land. The more fortunate amongst them succeeded in escaping from the Sahara, making their way to the isolated forts of the Jebel. Here, amongst the garrisons, I met with many of these unhappy dreamers, waiting for the day of the rebirth of Turkey. And it was in this part of the Sahara that Bakish contracted tuberculosis, without a chance of obtaining leave to

go away to Europe, where he might be cured. All that was permitted him was to go to this little oasis of Zlitin, close to the sea. But nothing could break his spirit; his faith endured. And with all this he remained a good Jew. He is one of the best informed men on the subject of Tripoli and its history. I saw this poor dreamer again, two years later, at the time of my second visit to Tripoli. He lay in the last agonies of his illness, tortured by the thought of leaving his large family destitute. When I returned again to the city after my travels through the country, just when the Young Turks had realized their dream of liberty, Albert Bakish was dead.

The community of the Hara of Zlitin received me with the utmost cordiality. An old jeweller by the name of Joseph ben Attia and the Sheik, Saul Sativi, put themselves at my disposal to show me around the town and the oasis. At Zlitin I came into contact with a population of about six hundred and forty Jews, primitive but pleasant people, of various occupations: jewellers, cobblers, weavers and peddlers, who travel all over the desert. There are two little synagogues at Zlitin, one of which is of recent construction. The other is situated outside the Hara; it is called Zlat Abu Sheif, named after a person reputed to be a saint. Several years ago the Mussulmans, jealous of the veneration accorded to the house, plotted to set fire to it, but the building was saved by the intervention of Tripoli. The synagogue has now become a place of pilgrimage, sacred to both Jews and Arabs.

It was on the site of the old Hara of Zlitin that I discovered several fragments with Greek inscriptions. A short time after this discovery, Dr. Bakish brought to my notice a Jewish tomb, dating from the Roman period; on the cover were carved fruits and a number of Hebrew characters almost illegible.

CHAPTER VII

FROM ZLITIN TO MESRATA

Our little caravan, which had been joined by the young son of Joseph ben Attia, who insisted on accompanying me as far as the oasis of Mesrata, advanced for about two hours through the palm-groves of Zlitin. Then we came to the open desert, and as we rode along, a soldier overtook us, one of the tribe of the Ben-al-Brahama, which still remembers its ancient Jewish origin. A little further on we reached a *funduq* (inn), and camped in its shadow, resting upon straw, surrounded by camels and asses. The innkeeper, Mohammed ben Revia, was a *marabut* (saint) and a lively fellow, who knew how to entertain his guests. For our benefit he declaimed in glowing words a eulogy on the grandeur of Israel. One Arab contended that the *Yahud* are not the Israelites of the Koran, but are the descendants of a camel. A lively discussion ensued, which was finally settled by the *marabut:* my poor friend Mordecai, with his torn, dirty caftan, and his black, greasy skull-cap, was graciously admitted to be a son of Israel. We parted from them on the best of terms, and continued our laborious journey beneath the August sun. We traversed a desert country known as Difnia—a gloomy name, meaning "tombs"—and entered at last the enormous palm forest around Mesrata. But imag-

ine the state we were in! Our faces were scorched by the sun, our skin was peeling, our mouths were inflamed by our Sahara diet (of which red pepper was the main ingredient, and which Rabbi Mordecai consumed like sweetmeats), and my whole body was an aching mass. It was Friday, towards evening, and we almost stormed the house of the local Rabbi, Isaac Hakmun.

It was due to the kindly ministrations of the Turkish doctor, Salih Yussuf Effendi, that I was soon restored to my normal state. From that day on I became acclimatized to the Sahara.

I had a letter from the governor for the Kaimakam Bejet Bey—a Caucasian by birth—who was well disposed towards the Jews. I knew, however, that I was not allowed to penetrate into that remote region of Grand Syrte, the ancient refuge of the Jews in Hellenistic times, where some very curious Jewish traditions still survive.

The Jewish population of Mesrata is divided between the two Haras of Mattin and Idr—of which the latter is the more ancient and numbers about a thousand. They suffered cruelly from the persecutions of the Almohades in the twelfth century, as the following passage, from the African addition to the Elegy of Ibn Ezra, attests:

And the stricken community of Mesrata hast Thou also forgotten,	ושכחת את קהל הנבוכים מצראתה

Whose suffering was so great and whose tongues are weary with lamenting;	אשר עונם גדול מאד ולשונם נשתה
And who were weighed down with evil decrees and with burdensome tasks;	וכתבו עליהם מסים ועבודה קשה.
Until a part of them fled from here to return no more;	והלך קצתם וברח ולא באו עד עתה.
Others were sent forth as exiles to Jerba—and this hast Thou also forgotten;	וקצת גלו לגירבה העיר אשר שכחת
And others went to Zorman, where they were led astray and their lives spared.	מהם הלך לצורמאן ותעו ונשארו חיתה.

This passage shows the important position occupied by the community of Mesrata prior to the year 1150. But that the city of Mesrata was not destroyed, as so many others were, is evident from the inscriptions which I have discovered in this oasis, indicating the persistence of the Jewish tradition in Mesrata from the twelfth century to the arrival of the Spanish exiles. In the *responsa* of Rabbi David ben Zmira or Zemera, may be found mention of rabbis who lived in this oasis in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The favorable situation of Mesrata, which lies only a few miles from the sea, and which is the southern port of Syrte, has predestined the town to become a commercial center of permanent importance. To-day the Jewish merchants and artisans of Mesrata travel over the whole of Syrte, and even go as far as Fezzan. They have even founded a colony in greater

Syrte, near the ancient Tell-el-Yehudia, the refuge of the Jews of Cyrenaica in olden times. This is the region of Syrte or Sort to which the Turks sought to attract the Jews by offering them holdings and certain privileges. In 1909 there were about fifty Jews in Sort.

It is true that the Jews of Mesrata have very old traditions, but to-day they are ignorant, superstitious, quarrelsome and violent. On the other hand, it must be conceded that they are enterprising and courageous. Their two synagogues do not seem to be enough for them, so every man of means has his own little synagogue in his home. The Talmud Torahs are in a deplorable condition. During my stay a young Mussulman opened a little school where Italian and French were taught. A number of Jewish children attended, for the Jewish parents of Mesrata are very appreciative of the benefits of education.

I had the good fortune to discover a group of Jewish memorial inscriptions of real historical importance, which are reproduced below:

The following inscription was found in Difnia, near Mesrata, together with two others which have since disappeared, one of which bore the name of a Cohen. Several words have been effaced, but what remains recalls the text and formulae peculiar to the Jews of Africa.[12]

I

This tomb	1 זה הקבר
Daughter of Rabbi Nissim	2 ביר רבי נסים

[12] See my aforementioned study.

3 הנפטרה לבית	Who departed for the House
4 עולמה בחדש כסלו	Eternal in the month of Kislev
5 שנת תתקמ"ז לעולם	In the year 947 of the world
6 הרחמן ישים חלקה	May the Merciful One give her her part
7 עם שרה רבקה	With Sarah, Rebekah
8 רחל ולאה בגן עדן	Rachel and Leah in Gan Eden
9 [מ]קדם [ו]יקים בה מ[קרא	To the east (and may the verse be fulfilled)[13]
10 [ש]כתוב יחיו [מתיך]	As it is written: (Thy dead) shall be quickened
11 נבלתי יקומון אמן	My body will rise again. Amen
12 [כי"ר]	(May this be His will)

The month of Kislev of the year 4947 of the creation corresponds to the end of the year 1186 C. E. This date is interesting historically because it shows that a generation after the destruction of the community by the Almohades (about 1150), there were Jews near Mesrata who openly professed their faith. Perhaps they were among the ones who had fled from Zorman to the open desert of Difnia to escape persecution.

II

Here is the text of the inscriptions found in Mesrata itself:

1 זה הקבר לחסאנה	This is the tomb of Hassana
2 בת ר' עיאד נ"ע	Daughter of Rabbi 'Oiad, his rest is in Paradise,
3 אשת ד[וד] ע"ה	The wife of Dav(id), peace be unto him!

[13] Isaiah, 26, 19.

(Aged) fifty-five (years)	4 [ב]ת חמ[ש וחמ]שים
May the Merciful give her	5 הרחמן ישים
Her part with	6 חלקה עם
(Sarah)	7 [שרה...]
To her House of Eternity	8 לבית עולמה
The year 902.	9 שנת תתק"ב

The Hassana here mentioned died in the year 4902 or 1142 C. E., that is to say, prior to the persecution of the Almohades.

III

The third inscription, dating from 1249, follows close on that of Difnia, which it resembles in text:

This is the tomb of (the honored)	1 זה הקבר [לכ']
Rabbi Simon Hazaken	2 ר' שמעון הזקן
Son of Rabbi Nissim Hazaken	3 ב"ר נסים הזקן
May the Merciful give him his	4 הרחמן ישים
Part in the Garden	5 חלקו בגן
of Eden. Amen and Amen	6 עדן אמן ואמן
Eternally Selah. (He departed)	7 נצח סלה [הלך]
To the House of Eternity	8 לבית עולמו
In the year five thousand	9 שנת חמשת אלפים
and nine.	10 ותשע שנים

The inscription refers to an important personage, as is evident from the term *Hazaken*, and also perhaps from the formula "the honored."

The year is 5009, or 1247 C. E.

IV

Inscription, date uncertain, but similar to the preceding in form:

Departed unto her House	1 נפטרה לבית
of Eternity, Ju(a)	2 עולמה גו[א]
Daughter of Rabbi Balhaya	3 בת ר' בלחייא
May her soul rest in Eden, the wife of our master	4 נ"ע אשת מרינו
And rabbi, Saadia,	5 ורבנו סעדיה
Son of the honorable Moses may his soul rest in Eden	6 בכ"ר משה נ"ע
Whose years were cut short.	7 בקוצר שנים

This inscription refers to the wife of a rabbi surnamed Saadia. The name Jua is rare: that of Balhaya unique. (Note the Arabic Bu-l-haia).

V

This inscription dates from 1447, and has the rabbinic character of the later period.

This is the tomb (in honor of Rabbi)	1 זה הקבר.....
Abraham, son of the honorable.....	2 אברהם בכ"ר.... יה
The officiating minister, he departed this world	3 ש"צ שנפטר מזה העולם
Having his years cut short, in the month of Shebat	4 בקוצר שנים בחודש שבט
In the year "Sweet is the sleep of the toiler, whether	5 שנת מתוקה שנת העובד
he consumeth much or little."	6 אם מעט ואם ה'ר'ב'ה' יאכל

7 והוא רמז לעמלי תורה
This alludes to those who labor in the Torah.

8 הרחמן ישים חלקו [בגן עדן]
May the Merciful give him his part [in Paradise]

9 עם העוסקים בתורה
With those who are occupied with the Torah.

10 והחשבון ליצירה.....
The reckoning according to the creation is. . .

11 והמשכיל יבין
The wise will understand!

The date is הרבה, 5207, reckoning the ה as 5000. 5207 corresponds to 1447 C. E.

VI

This was found in bad condition. It dates from the year 4200, or 1440 C. E., but recalls in its original phrasing the inscriptions of the Jebel Nefussa, after which we have reconstructed it.[14]

1 [זה הקבר] להרבני [דו]ד ר״ת ש
(This is the tomb) . . .of Rabbi (David or
Said, may he find refuge in the spirit of God) who

2 [ונפטר בקוצ]ר שנים שנת הר׳
died at an untimely age, in the year 5200 (?)

3 [ה]רחמן ישים חלקו [עם]
(May) the Merciful give him his part (with)

4 ישיני חברון ועם
Those that sleep in Hebron

5 משה ואהרן ועם שבע
With Moses and Aaron and with the seven

[14] See further on.

[categories] of the just in the Garden	6 [כתו]ת צדיקים בגן
of Eden (and may) his death serve	7 עדן [ותהי] מיתתו ל
as an atonement for all his sins	8 כפרה על כל עונותיו
.....	9 .....
(Selah) Amen.[15]	10 אמן

[15] For a commentary on these inscriptions, see my memoir: "Voyage d'Etudes Juives," etc. A stone bearing the name of a Cohen has been seen by Jews in a place close to Zarigh. There are in addition, near Mesrata, several Qubba, or tombs of saints, which at one time belonged to the Jews, but the Arabs have since seized them. Jews are not allowed to enter these sanctuaries.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM HOMS TO MSELLATA

Between the shore of Homs or, according to the ancient name, Lelida, and Terhuna, lies a region particularly rich in Phoenician, Jewish and Roman memorials. Through this strip of cultivated land is the only route by which the Jebel Gharian, the troglodyte country dominating the route from Fezzan, can be reached from the sea without passing through the desert. It is dotted with the *duars* (groups of tents) of the nomad tribes, and right in the center of the region, opposite the town of Msellata, rises the hill which dominates the whole district and which is crowned by a Roman fort in an excellent state of preservation.

On the night of the Fast of the Ninth of Ab we were at Homs. Hearing that a Jewish caravan was to set out for Msellata the same evening, I eagerly seized the opportunity of visiting so interesting a place on Tish'a be-Ab. I was presented to my fellow-travellers, two Msellata Jews, bare-foot and clad in a bournous that had once been white. We hired their asses from them, and engaged the men as drivers.

It was night when we started, and the rays of the moon lit up the ancient ruins scattered along the Wed Lebda. After advancing for four hours we encamped close to a *Kasba* called Ajuhat. I

stretched myself out on a sack and, refreshed by the cool wind which never fails Africa at night, I fell asleep. It was the first night I had ever passed beneath the open sky of the desert. Unforgettable are those nights in the Sahara under a sky brilliant with the southern stars. How often, since then, lying in the underground dwelling of a troglodyte, or in a stifling mountain hut, have I longed for the pure air of the desert and for the coolness of its night-mists!

We arose before dawn and resumed our journey. My ass-driver, Abraham, was unremitting in his attentions. He called me "rabbi," and showed me all the points of interest on the road, with which he was very well acquainted. After a two-hour march we passed by a Roman fort, opposite a hill from which arose the houses of the town of Msellata. As we ascended the slope leading to the town, we suddenly heard the voice of women raised in lamentation. Drawing nearer, we saw that they were Jewesses robed in white. We learned later that it is a custom for the Jewish women of the city to gather in this place on Tish'a be-Ab, to weep for the dead and to invoke the shades of their ancestors. There was something terrible in their wild, barbaric shrieks. Absorbed in the contemplation of this extraordinary spectacle, I failed to notice the rapid approach of a cavalcade of men mounted on donkeys and mules, until they were almost upon us. It was made up of the rabbis and other important personages of the town, who had set out in quest of the Messiah who, according to a

tradition already noted in the Talmud, is to appear on the ninth of Ab, "poor and mounted on an ass." As chance would have it, they were suddenly confronted with the author, mounted on an ass, and certainly looking the part as far as poverty was concerned; and to cap it all, speaking with his companion in Hebrew. They set up a shout of "Baruk Habba!" (Welcome), flung themselves from their mounts and prostrated themselves before me, kissing the hem of my coat. My companion gesticulated and shouted. It was with the greatest difficulty that he convinced these poor folk that I was not the Messiah whom they were expecting with the dawn of the fast-day, but only a "haham" from Paris who was interested in the welfare of his coreligionists! They crowded around me with greetings. The women joined the escort to conduct me with due ceremony into the town.

I had the good fortune to meet in the town a Jew from Salonica, M. Mayer Nehemias by name, local controller of tobacco taxes. After having rested a half hour in his house, discussing the deplorable condition of the local community, we went together to the synagogue. The Hara, or Jewish quarter, occupies the larger part of the town, and is made up of wretched looking mud huts, huddled together in narrow alleys, with here and there a building of stone. I shall not dilate on the indescribable smell issuing from the houses.

The synagogue itself is the largest building in the town. Our appearance there created a sensation.

The people, seated on the ground, repeating the Kinot (Lamentations) in Hebrew and in Arabic, were filthy from head to foot. I watched the expressions on the faces of the mourners who were bewailing loudly the destruction of Jerusalem without appearing to have any understanding of the real significance of the occasion. I noted amongst them several types peculiar to the pure Bedouin groups, and wondered whether this was the effect of life in the desert, or whether it was due to an admixture of Arab blood.

Msellata is the first Jewish settlement in the interior, and is the advance guard of the Jews of the Sahara. The physical characteristics of the inhabitants, their mode of living, their traditions and customs, and the absence of the names Cohen and Levi, all go to show the antiquity of Jewish settlement in these parts. As they do not bear family names, but patronymics only (such as Reuben ben Simeon), it is difficult to determine their exact origin. They themselves claim to have come from Jerba, and, in fact, the Elegy of Ibn Ezra does speak of Jews from Jerba taking refuge in Msellata. The Jews of Msellata have, indeed, several customs in common with those of Jerba. One family only, that of Silin, bears an ethnic name, after the ruins of a Roman site which we passed on the way, and which had been abandoned by their ancestors about sixty years ago.

Formerly the Jews were very numerous in this region. A document speaks of the ravages of the plague among the population in 1733 and in 1767. Many families fled far into the desert. The traveller,

Benjamin II, gives the number of families in Msellata in 1850 as about two hundred and fifty.[16] He adds that the name of the Rabbi at that time was Moses, and that the people made good wine. In the middle of the nineteenth century, there was another Jewish settlement in the region, but after an outbreak of the plague the survivors gathered together to Msellata, which now forms the sole Jewish center of the province. The present Rabbi, Joseph Menahem, is one of the few survivors of this last epidemic.

The Turkish domination has brought with it a certain degree of security: it has not succeeded, however, in relieving the wretched condition of the Jews, or in putting an end to unjust discrimination against them. The six hundred and fifty Jews of Msellata were cruelly exploited by the Turkish officials. Like all the Jews of the Sahara, as the Turks themselves admit, those of Msellata form the laboring and productive element of the population. They are merchants, jewellers, locksmiths and cobblers, and the women weave, sew, and work in the gardens. Life is primitive in Msellata. The houses are built round an inner court, from which a slippery passage leads to the outside. There is no furniture in the houses. The women bake bread in pit-like ovens. The grain is prepared at home, the women grinding it between two flat, circular stones bored through the center. But there are also mills which are turned

[16] See his מסעות ישראל.

by camels. One of these mills is owned and run by the synagogue.

What a poverty-stricken and ignorant population! Locked in their ancient Hara, buried in the contemplation of their past, which absorbs all their aspirations, all their emotions, they feel nothing, hear nothing. And this past is a tapestry woven of legends, of traditions tinged with mysticism, and the constant recital of its glories and miracles is their one distraction.

I spent a whole afternoon together with Rabbi Joseph Menahem in exploring the neighborhood. The Jewish cemetery lies in the midst of gardens of fig-trees and olive-trees; its stones are blackened by the smoke of the oil lamps which the women are wont to light there in honor of the dead. Nearby is the Qubba or mausoleum of a nameless saint, whom they call "el Haham." They tell that he was a *Shaliah* from Jerusalem who, many, many generations ago, penetrated as far as Msellata, and died there from the bite of a scorpion, but at the moment of his death he cleared the land of scorpions by a conjuration, and since that day they have never returned. Jews and Mussulmans alike respect the tomb of the unknown saint. The old rabbi recounted other legends of the past. He told me of a Mussulman who was struck dead for having taken possession of the sacred soil where the unknown saint was laid to rest. He told me of the case of his own (rabbi Joseph's) wife, who in 1901, had a stroke of epilepsy and began to speak Hebrew, although

she was ignorant of the language. He spoke of apparitions of the dead and of things cabalistic. As for me, I listened with the intensest interest, and perceived in this rich folk-lore sure proof of the antiquity of this Jewish group. In the absence of written documents I fell back on two sources of information: an examination of the Jewish landmarks in the district, and an inquiry into the manners and customs prevalent there to-day. As a matter of fact few districts are so rich in Jewish memorials as that which extends from the "Ras el Yehud," the Jewish cape near Zlitin, to a point south of Msellata. The *Wed* which runs through the length of the region south of Homs is called the Wed el Yehud (the Jewish Torrent), while along its slopes may be found citadels of a Roman type, which go by the name of Ksur el Yehud (the Jewish Citadels).

A half an hour's distance from the village there are a number of Roman wells called Biur el Yehudia—the Jewish Wells. A little further on, in a district named Himan, there is another citadel, "Kasr Yehud."

Two hours to the south there is a district which bears the Jewish name of Halfon, and there may be seen hewn stones which form the Zlath Simha, an ancient synagogue now abandoned but still venerated.

Six hours to the south-east, is a region set with gardens, which bears the name of Lud el Yehud.

And very much further on, close to Orfella, there is an abandoned fortress, Kasr el Ashaqa (Fortress of Isaac), whereof miracles are related. Merchants

travelling to Msellata assert that they have seen Hebrew inscriptions in one of these castles. Here is the text of one of these inscriptions:

"Isaac, the son of Meleak, son of Yacusti, son of Jehudi."

The Jews of the district are familiar with the exploits of the Jewish tribes which dominated the Syrte so long ago.

We spent the evening after the ninth of Ab at the house of a distinguished member of the community. As there were no Cohanim amongst them, the Jews of the place profited by the presence of Rabbi Mordecai, who was a Cohen, to redeem a three-months-old first-born son who had not yet passed through the ceremony of the redemption (*Pidyon ha-Ben*). The advent of a Cohen is a real red-letter day for the Jews of the Sahara. The Cohanim take advantage of it, particularly those of Jerba, to collect a tithe of the products of the soil according to the Law.

One of the strangest superstitions common to the Jews of Msellata and Iffren is that which makes them close their doors to strangers during the first two days of Passover and during the first two days of Rosh Hashana. This custom is more in evidence at the Jebel than at Msellata, where it has fallen into disuse.

The custom of "Kapparot" is practised twice, on the evening before the New Year and on the evening before Yom Kippur. The bones of the fowl used in the ceremony are buried in the cemetery. A stranger may not eat of the Kapparah. The

morning after the Feast of Weeks they are accustomed to offer up libations. They besprinkle one another with water on the streets. The parents of a newborn son distribute a plateful of eatables, called *Shimshia*, amongst the neighbors, the night before the fast of the ninth of Ab.

CHAPTER IX

IN CYRENAICA

The reader will remember the deplorable physical condition in which I reached the oasis of Mesrata. While I was there, an order from the government forced me to abandon the idea of penetrating the mysterious region of the Grand Syrte.

Jewish traditions still linger in the Syrte. We know that in Roman antiquity there existed a community at Borion which attributed its origin to King Solomon and which, in the sixth century, was converted at the point of the sword; we also find vestiges of a second ancient Jewish settlement, "Vicus Judaeorum Augusti."[17] There are also traces of a colony which must originally have been Jewish-Arabian. There is also a Tell-el Yehudia, and close to Orfella, a number of Kasr (citadels) Ulad Ishac, about which have gathered many legends. Among others there figures in these legends a certain Jewish queen by the name of Fanana. Near this spot, in the district of Syrte, was founded the first modern community of Syrte.

Derna and Bengazi are the only points inhabited by a settled population in what was ancient Cyrenaica. After sailing for thirty hours along the inhospitable

[17] See Slouschz, "Hebraeo-Phéniciens et Judéo-Berbères," vol. II, book I.

coast of Syrte, we entered the Bay of Bengazi. A Turco-Greek town in a setting that was more Greek than African rose before us.

Cyrenaica is a peninsula facing Greece on the north and Palestine on the east, a plateau some twenty-five thousand square kilometers between Libya and Egypt. The Phoenicians, and without doubt the Jews also, knew of its existence and perhaps even colonized it in very early times.

This region can be identified with the Sepharad or Hesperides of the Prophet Obadiah. By a piece of good fortune, there was unearthed a seal that must have belonged to an ancient Israelite; it bore, in ancient Hebrew characters of the classical epoch, the same name as the prophet just mentioned:

"To Obadiah, son of Yashub." לעובדיהו בן יָשָׁב

The Greeks began to colonize Cyrenaica in the seventh century B.C.E, the time of the founding of Cyrene, after which the whole district was named. The Greek settlements prospered and, from the period of the Ptolemies, the Jews were attracted in such large numbers to the district, which went by the name of Pentapolis, "the five cities," that Josephus looked upon it as "the continuation of Judea beyond Egypt."

From its very beginnings this colonization was of a military character. In 320 B.C.E., Ptolemy Soter, the founder of the dynasty, established a number of military colonies composed of Palestinian Semites, in order to keep a firmer hold on the Greek population.

From among the Jews and Samaritans whom he led into captivity, he chose thirty thousand able-bodied men and sent them to guard the fortresses of Libya and of Nubia.

These military colonies were no doubt the cause of the ascendancy of the Hellenic Judaism of Alexandria. With the beginning of the second century, the arrival of large numbers of fugitives from the persecution of Antiochus in Palestine, rekindled the spark of religious and national fervor in the Jews of Libya, which finally roused antagonism between the Jews and the Greeks.

In Cyrene lived Jason of Cyrene, a Jewish author, who wrote a work in five books on the Wars of the Maccabees. This treatise, parts of which have been incorporated into the second Book of the Maccabees, breathes an ardent love for the culture and the soil of Palestine.

The colonies prospered. Strabo of Cappadocia, an author living in the year 80 B.C.E., is quoted by Josephus,[18] anent the influence of the Jewish colonies, to the following effect:

"And it hath come to pass that Egypt and Cyrene, as having the same governors, and a great number of other nations, imitate their way of living, and maintain great bodies of these Jews in a peculiar manner, and grow up to a greater prosperity with them, and make use of the same laws with that nation also. Accordingly, the Jews have places assigned them in Egypt,

[18] Jewish Antiquities, XIV, 7.

wherein they inhabit, besides what is peculiarly allotted to this nation at Alexandria, which is a large part of that city. There is also an ethnarch allowed them, who governs the nation, and distributes justice to them, and takes care of their contracts, and of the laws to them belonging, as if he were the ruler of a free republic. In Egypt, therefore, this nation is powerful, because the Jews were originally Egyptians, and because the land wherein they inhabit, since they went thence, is near to Egypt. They also removed into Cyrene, because that this land adjoined to the government of Egypt, as well as does Judea, or rather was formerly under the same government."

The same Strabo speaks of a revolt of the Jews against the Romans which was repressed by the Roman general Lucullus. This spirit of liberty amongst the Jews of Cyrenaica explains their later history. Besides composing the military colonies posted along the road from the plateau to Syrte, the Jews formed a large part of the population of the Greek towns. "There were four classes of men among those of Cyrene; that of citizens, that of husbandmen, the third of strangers, and the fourth of Jews. Now these Jews have already gotten into all cities; and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men, and is not possessed by them."[19] The last passage alludes to the autonomy which the Jews enjoyed and which even the Romans themselves respected.

[19] Ibid.

Already in 138–139 the Jews of Cyrenaica figured among the Jewish colonies of the world of antiquity which the Roman Senate took under its protection as "an ally of the Jewish people."[20]

From the time of Philo (Legatio Ad Caium, 30) the Jews already formed a majority of the population. Without doubt from this period dates the inscription found at Berenice (to-day called Bengazi) which we reproduce below. This inscription bears witness to the predominance of the Greek language among the Jews, and also testifies to the intimate relations existing between the Jews and the Roman authorities. It shows the organization of the Jewish communities, which formed a communal group under the direction of nine archons. In the large centers there also existed a *gerousia*—or senate—and an ethnarch.

The autonomy which the Jews enjoyed did not prevent them from looking toward Jerusalem as their center. They sent their tithes thither, despite the fact that this was prohibited by the Greeks. They went there on mass pilgrimages, and even had a synagogue for Libyans at Jerusalem. They proselytized not only from amongst the Greeks but also from amongst the Libyans, even though the latter were looked upon as Egyptians by the learned men of Palestine.[21]

Nothing further is known of the fate of these Jewish military colonies. Perhaps, after the revolt of 67,

[20] Jewish Antiquities, XII, 3; XVI, 6, etc.
[21] Cf. Talmud Yerushalmi, כלאים 8, 3, etc.

the colonists retreated into the interior. This would explain the persistence of the traditions among the Berbers which tell of the domination of Jewish colonies. It is known that the Jews of Cyrene took part in the wars of 68–70. It was in Cyrene that the High Priest Ishmael, who was finally taken by the Romans and beheaded, sought refuge. Jonathan the Weaver, one of the chiefs of the desert, who escaped at the destruction of Jerusalem, came to Cyrene, and sought to penetrate into the desert with two thousand men.[22] He was, however, denounced, seized and sent to Rome by the prefect Catullus, who took advantage of the situation to put to death two thousand wealthy Jews of Cyrene and to confiscate their property.

But it was in the Jewish insurrections of 115–118 that the Jews of Cyrenaica took an active part.[23] In 115 they threw themselves upon their Greek neighbors, massacring, it is said, some 220,000 of them, after which they endeavored to join forces with their brothers who had risen in Egypt and in Cyprus. The Roman general Marcius Turbo hastened to the spot with large forces of infantry and cavalry and even with a naval division. The war lasted three years and the rebellion was mercilessly suppressed. The Roman legions surrounded the rebels and put them to the sword; even the women were not spared. Cyrene was devastated, and almost depopulated of Greeks and Jews alike. To cut off the retreat of

[22] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VII, 11.

[23] We have studied these wars in "Les Hebraeo-Phéniciens et Judéo-Berbères," II, book I.

the rebels, the Romans turned the whole country into a desert. These measures, however, only succeeded in driving a large number of Jews further into the Syrte and towards the Atlas Mountains. The wars of independence of the Libyans against Rome began immediately after the Jewish wars.[24]

From this time onwards there began to manifest itself, in the un-Romanized regions of Africa, a Jewish political and social influence which was to make itself felt until the Mussulman conquest.

If Cyrenaica was to remain for ever after a ruined country, never to recover from the results of the war,[25] the neighboring countries continued in the possession of Jewish colonies. Thus, in the sixth century, we have the town of Borion, of which the inhabitants traced back their origin as far as the reign of Solomon. There were also the other colonies of the Roman period (Vicus Augusti, etc.).[26] Finally Ptolemais (Tolmeita) had a Jewish colony up to the Middle Ages. As for the Jews who were lost amongst the Berbers, traditions among the latter state that the Jews remained in possession of the principal points of the Cyrenian plateau until the Mussulman period.

The reader will now perceive what a great historic interest Cyrenaica possesses for the Jews.

[24] See Orosius, VII, 2.

[25] The Laments of Synesius, "De Regno," 2; written in the fourth century.

[26] See the work cited in note 23.

CHAPTER X

BENGAZI

Situated picturesquely on the site of the ancient Berenice (one of the towns of Pentapolis), Bengazi possessed in ancient times an important Judeo-Hellenic community. The marble column with Greek inscriptions which was found there is one of the most curious documents relating to the history of the Jews in Africa. The stone is now in the museum of Marseilles. The inscription is as follows:

"The year 55, the 25th of Phaoph, at the assembly of the Feast of Tabernacles, under the archontate of Cleandres, son of Stratonicus; Euphranor, son of Ariston; Sosigenes, son of Sosippus; Andromachus, son of Andromachus; Marcus Laelius Onasion, son of Apollonius; Philonides, son of Agemon; Autocles, son of Zeno; Zonicus, son of Theodotus; and Josephus, son of Straton:

"Seeing that Marcus Titius, son of Sextus, an illustrious man, of the Tribe of Aemilia, has, since his accession to the prefecture, conducted himself in public affairs with much humanity and integrity; and seeing that he has given evidence in his conduct of all manner of excellences, and still continues to do so; and seeing that he has shown himself to be humane not only in general affairs, but also to those who have had recourse to him in their private affairs, treating

with particular favor the Jews of our synagogue, and that he does not cease from executing deeds worthy of his beneficent character:

"For these reasons, the heads and corporate body of the Jews of Berenice have commanded, that there be delivered a discourse in his praise, and that he be crowned by name with olive and with the 'lemniscus' at each one of their public assemblies and at each new moon, and that, under the direction of the heads, the foregoing resolution be engraved upon a column of Parian marble which shall be erected in the place of honor in the amphitheatre. It was unanimously agreed upon."

Nothing is known concerning the fate of the Jews of Bengazi in the Middle Ages. When, on the definite annexation of the province by Turkey, our co-religionists came, together with Turks, to settle in Bengazi, they already found there an ancient community, "Kahal Bengazi."[27] Perhaps this community was composed of the descendants of the numerous Jews of the ancient city of Ptolemy (Tolmeita). On the other hand, all authorities agree that the cemetery which is situated at some distance from the town must date from a much earlier period. Indeed, the excavations which I made there brought to light a number of fragments of stone dating from a period which cannot be settled definitely, but which must certainly be remote.

From the outside the town looks clean enough, and

[27] We infer this fact from a *Takkanah* (communal decree) of 1840.

recalls the little towns on the Greek coast. It is one of the most active centers of the commerce with the Udai and the western Sudan.

In 1850 Bengazi had a hundred Jewish families, divided into two synagogues: that of Bengazi and that of Tripoli. A statute drawn up in 1880 bears the signatures of fifty notables. To-day there are at Bengazi 2000 to 2500 Israelites. They consist of merchants and workingmen, artisans, jewellers, shoemakers, etc. There is no Hara or separate Jewish quarter in the town, so that the Jews live scattered among non-Jews. In general appearance, in dress and in manner of living the Jews of Bengazi resemble those of Italy. This is true also of their splendid physique and finely chiselled features.

The material condition of the Jews of this town is fair. A number of them carry on trade with Mediterranean ports. Unfortunately, the town lacks a recognized religious head; it also lacks men of education and culture to represent the Jews before the Turkish government. But, on the whole, the youth of Bengazi are active and enterprising.

Contrary to the general custom in Africa, the Jews of Bengazi do not indulge in any games of chance whatsoever: by a certain *takkanah* or statute of the community, of which I have seen the original text, dated 1840, the members of the community are pledged never to tolerate any games of chance in their midst. And this pledge has been faithfully kept. The young men of good family, who are earnest and energetic, have founded in this town, where the Alliance Is-

raélite is unknown, a religious school, or Talmud Torah, which is very well organized, thanks to the efforts of men like Elia Juili, Hai Teshuba, Fargun, Dana, etc.

The Jews of Bengazi are very hospitable. They have a benevolent society supported chiefly by the gabelle (tax on kosher meat) and by *mizvot* (donations). They distribute about five hundred francs a month. In 1906, however, I found the Jews of Bengazi passing through a very acute economic crisis.

Several months before my arrival in Tripoli, a fire broke out in the bazaar at Bengazi. Instead of extinguishing the fire, the Turkish soldiers who had been sent to the scene of the conflagration, systematically pillaged the blazing booths. The victims of this deplorable incident were almost all Jews, among them several French and Italian subjects. They claim that the damage done amounted to a million and a half francs. I have myself spoken with one merchant who suffered very severely in this catastrophe. Satisfaction was made of some of the claims presented by European subjects, but nothing was done for the Turkish subjects. The Turkish officials pretended that the fire and the pillage had been the work of the Senussiya, that mystic, Mussulman order, of fanatical and anti-Christian tendencies, whose adherents are so numerous in this district. The rumor of the participation of the Senussiya in this "pogrom" at Bengazi finally spread as far as Europe. Great was my surprise, therefore, when, on arriving at Bengazi, I learned that, far

from having been a party to this plundering, the Senussiya, hostile as they are to the Christians, are very well disposed toward the Jews. And even among the Turkish heads, the only official who had exerted himself to prevent this outrage was the Yuz-Bashi, Hussein Effendi, himself a Senussi. This last fact made me anxious to study at close range the character of this religious order which dominates the interior of Cyrenaica.

CHAPTER XI[27a]

THE SENUSSIYA AND THE JEWS

The great and formidable Mussulman order of the Senussiya was founded by Sheik-es-Senussi in the middle of the nineteenth century and since then has expanded with remarkable rapidity. The Senussiya aim at a return to the austerity of primitive Islamism, opposing Christianity and occidental civilization in general, and preaching purity, asceticism and prayer.

The Order has its center in the oasis of Jarabub, in southern Cyrenaica, and its head is Sidi-el-Mahdi. The regular members are all descendants of the Prophet; but they also admit men who are sons-in-law of Senussi and their children. They have installed throughout the whole of Mussulman Africa many *Zawya*, or hospices, where travellers and nomads may pray and find food and shelter. In Europe their political and social power has been exaggerated; wild stories are told of the fierce and bloodthirsty spirit that they show, especially towards Christians.

The Bengazi incident was enough to enlighten me on this point, and to show me how strong is the tendency to exaggerate the rôle which the Senussiya play. I have given a good deal of attention to the

[27a] See my study in La Revue du Monde Musulman, vol. I, No. 2.

question of the relations between the Senussiya and the Jews, carrying on an investigation at first hand.

I must begin by stating that nowhere in my travels have I come across a single complaint against the Senussiya as such on the grounds of injustice or extortion. Friend and foe agree in affirming that they have remained faithful to their articles of faith. What constitutes their chief source of power is, above all, the simplicity of their lives, their democratic spirit, and their constant desire to show themselves the only true friends of the Arabs. As to their attitude towards non-Mussulmans, the Jews have no cause for complaint. The merchants of Bengazi go far into the desert, and are always well treated there. The Christians, despite the fact that one of the chief aims of the Senussiya is to clear the country of them, have never suffered at their hands.

All the Jews of whom I have made inquiry are of the opinion that the Senussiya, besides being well disposed towards them, are, on the whole, a peaceful people, living a simple and austere life. The Senussiya themselves constantly protest against the accusation that they are the instigators of disorder. Judging by their protestations, their sole desire is a return to the primitive ideas preached by the Prophet, to justice and to equality.

A *Rais*, or captain of a ship, with whom I happened to be travelling, spoke to me with the greatest admiration of these holy brothers, who do only good to the people. They teach them the Koran under

the open sky, after the fashion of the first believers, and try to free them from unjust taxation.

I have come across these *Zawya* of the Senussiya everywhere, but their center is in the region of Cyrenaica, where the absence of cities is favorable to their activities.

Escorted by a Turkish soldier, I penetrated into the interior of this province. Ancient Cyrenaica, once so populous and so highly civilized, is to-day a desert; in this whole district, as far as the Sudan, there are only two small towns, Bengazi and the coast town of Derna. To these may perhaps be added the settlement of Merj, in the Jebel, to which a few residents have been attracted, firstly because the place is an outpost of the Turkish administration, and secondly because the Senussiya have established a *Zawya* there. Taking advantage of the fact that the region is for the most part an uninhabited wilderness, the Senussiya have stretched across the desert a chain of *Zawya* which recall the hospices of the Middle Ages, and through which the Senussiya exert a profound influence on the surrounding nomad tribes. The *Zawya* has become a sort of center of exchange and barter for the nomads, who carry on transactions both in money and in kind. They give shelter to all wayfarers excepting Christians, even extending their hospitality to Jewish merchants.

Thanks to the good-will of the Senussiya, Jewish merchants have been able to establish themselves at Merj, which is the only town of the interior situated on a lake. I made my way with my escort

from Bengazi to el-Tocra, the ancient Teucheira of the Greeks. We passed through a magnificent plain dotted with ruins, and skirted two lakes which lay brilliant in the sunlight. On our journey we chanced across the tent of a *Mudir*, or Turkish official, who was on his way from Garna, the ancient Cyrene. I accepted his invitation to share his modest repast, and during the meal my amiable host gave me astonishing accounts of the fertility of the soil, and told me of the doings of the nomads, a tribe of which had just been repulsed towards the south by the Turkish troops, who claim entire mastery over the region. In addition, he gave me a detailed description of the ruins of synagogues and of the Jewish cemeteries which are scattered throughout the whole country. Particularly numerous are the Jewish memorials to be met with in Cyrene, that ancient Judeo-Greek city, the birthplace of Simon of Cyrene and of the heroes of the Judeo-Roman wars of 115–118.

After bidding farewell to my kind host, I turned my steps towards the Jebel Lahder, looming gray in the distance. Beyond lay the famous plateau of ancient Cyrenaica which was my goal. We advanced slowly across the red plain. Not a tree nor a human dwelling was to be seen. At last a *zawya* came into sight. Our first impression was not very favorable; it looked more like a stable than a human habitation. Near the *zawya* I turned aside to visit the race courses of ancient Adrianopolis, the city established by Hadrian to repopulate the country

after the wars of the Jews and the Graeco-Romans.

At rare intervals we came across groups of *gurbi*, or nomad tents of tattered canvass. About them were gathered the nomads, the men in brown bournous, the women with blue shawls draped about them and the children naked and generously tattooed. The settlement was guarded by savage dogs. The children of the desert, who were of the tribe of the Auergehr, were evidently mistrustful of my Turkish soldier, whose appearance inspired them with visible terror. Obviously the Turks are masters here, despite the Senussiya.

We ascended steadily, and reached a spur of the Jebel which thrust itself abruptly in the direction of the coast. These ridges, which are very symmetrical, all turn towards the sea, and make the plateau easy of access. As we ascended, a vast plain unrolled beneath us. To the north lay the Mediterranean, a brilliant blue in the sunlight. In the middle distance showed the colder blue of the salt lakes, and at our feet was spread the red plain. And far in the distance, east, west and south, stood up the summits of the mountains which mark the limits of the wide Cyrenian plateau, the whole a vast panorama of plain and hill, forest and river, and all around us groves of olive and tangles of wild roses. The air was clear and soft, and a cool wind blew across the heights.

I could have gazed upon this glorious scene for hours, but now the sun began to set and my escort urged me to return to the plain. We descended slowly, weary after our ten-hour march, making our

way towards the *zawya* of Deriana, the only shelter to be found in all the neighborhood.

At last we reached the *zawya* of the Senussiya, which rises from a walled-in garden close by the sea. From within there issued the sound of a mournful chanting. The Senussiya brethren were at prayer. We knocked, but the door remained closed. At length a young Arab accosted us insolently and said that in the absence of the Sheik of the *zawya*, Sidi Hassan, we could not gain admittance.

The day was drawing to a close in a blaze of color. There was a constant coming and going of Arabs to and from the house of prayer. They came, bearing offerings of fruit and grain, which they left outside the doors. The insolent young Arab opened fire with a volley of incoherent questions. Then my escort told him that I was a Jew, and he tried to draw me into a religious discussion. In answer to one of his assertions I quoted a passage from the Koran, saying that I knew the sacred book in the original.

"What!" screamed the young Arab, smiting his forehead, "you,—you are fit to understand the Koran, an imbecile like you!"

One does not argue with a fanatic, if one can help it, but there are occasions when one cannot avoid a reply. "Why should I not understand the Koran? Am I not a descendant of Abraham, who was no less a prophet than your own?" The logic of my answer took the wind out of his sails. His whole manner changed. During the rest of the interview I could feel in his attitude a sort of respect mingled with

sympathy for this Jewish effendi who could read the Koran in the original and who knocked fearlessly at the door of the Holy House.

At last the Sheik, the head of the *zawya*, arrived. He was a man of medium height, but of sturdy build, and with vigor expressed in every line of his face. My escort was completely charmed and won over by the gracious courtesies which the Sheik lavished upon him, and which seemed to be part of a ritual of hospitality. I, however, was at first completely ignored by Sidi Hassan, who took me for a Christian. But as soon as he learned that I was a Jew he made me heartily welcome and invited me to pass the night in the *zawya*. Here was one of those rare instances of a Jew enjoying special privileges just because he is a Jew.

Meanwhile the faithful kept arriving in numbers for *Maghreb* prayers. As soon as the door was opened to us, I entered the *zawya*, and found myself in a sort of courtyard, round which there ran a number of galleries of varying width. In the courtyard were donkeys, horses and camels. Our hosts brought us the *difa*, a meal consisting of warm barley bread and a soup made with oil.

After the meal I was shown to my bed, a bank of earth, the place of honor for the distinguished guest. Here, in the heart of the desert, remote from civilization, surrounded by the redoubtable Senussiya, the reputed implacable enemies of all Europeans, I lay down to sleep. From the dark galleries there floated down the voices of the holy brothers at prayer:

their melancholy chant reminded me of the *Tikkun* of the night of Shabuot, תקון ליל שבועות. Once I woke in the middle of the night: the chanting of the brothers had not ceased. And when I left at dawn I could still hear them at their pious offices.

From all the observations which I made,[28] I was able to convince myself that the Senussiya are not the ferocious fanatics they are generally supposed to be, and that the Jews in particular have little to complain of in regard to the treatment they have received at their hands. I learned, too, that the Senussiya suffer from the domination of the Turks. Moreover, Mansur-el-Cabli, who lives at Bengazi, and who is the head of the Senussiya, himself assured me of his friendship for the Jews.

Later on, I travelled, on the boat which took me back to Tripoli, in the company of Hussein Effendi, who was of Senussiya origin, and who was the officer who had defended the Jews from the pillaging Turkish soldiery on the occasion of the fire at Bengazi. He gave me definite information on the subject of the Jews in Cyrenaica, and enlightened me considerably as to the relations existing between them and the Senussiya.

[28] See my articles in Revue du Monde Musulman.

CHAPTER XII

THE CYRENAICA EXPEDITION

I had planned to return to Cyrenaica in 1908. The little I had seen and heard of it had made me eager to undertake an expedition across the plateau, at one time so renowned and to-day so remote and difficult of access. Considerations of a more practical nature finally made possible the realization of the project. It will be remembered that at the time of my conference with Rejeb Pasha, governor of Tripoli, I had acclaimed agriculture as a means of regenerating the Jews of Tripoli and elsewhere. This official went further. I had told him that our friend Israel Zangwill would be happy if Turkey would reserve for immigrant Jews a whole district on an autonomous basis: and now he expressed himself willing to invite the Jews to come and settle in Tripoli. It was with the coöperation of the general secretary, Bekir Bey, and of the dragoman, Jacob Krieger Effendi, that the board of Directors of the "Jewish Territorial Organization," seconded in their efforts by European and African philanthropists, succeeded in organizing an expedition to Cyrenaica for the study of agricultural conditions in that country. A blue book published by the Territorial Organization, the work of the members of the expedition, gives a fair idea of the practical and scientific results achieved on this

journey, whilst the President in his preface recounts the eventful history of the Jewish colonization scheme.[29]

We know now that the Cyrenaica colonization scheme could not materialize, but went the way of all dreams of the creation of an autonomous national Jewish colony. Nevertheless here are a few of the details of this journey for which science and ourselves are beholden to the perseverance of Mr. Zangwill.

The expedition, made up of Professor Gregory, geologist, Dr. Eder, physician, Mr. Duff, engineer, and Mr. Trotter, agronomist, all English gentlemen, arranged to meet in July 1908, in Tripoli, where I was to join it. We adjusted all difficulties with the authorities and, accompanied by Mr. Jacob Krieger, proceeded to Bengazi, where the governor, Ghalib Bey, gave us a hearty welcome. We were equally successful in establishing pleasant relations with Mansur-el-Cabli, the lay chief of the Senussi, who promised to do all in his power to further our project.

We arrived at Derna, the second port of Cyrenaica. Derna is an Arabian village of 6000 inhabitants, of whom 300 are Jews. The latter are more backward than those of Bengazi. In their synagogue is an ancient *sefer*, or scroll of the Law, which is famous throughout the whole of Africa. It is told that once this scroll was lost in a shipwreck, that it floated to the surface and drifted as far as Derna, which it

[29] Report of the work of the Commission sent out by the Jewish Territorial Organization to Cyrenaica.

reached intact. The Jews took possession of it and bore it in triumph to the synagogue. They still look upon it as a relic which brings health and happiness. Pilgrims from many African towns come to Derna, convinced of the efficacy of a blessing in the presence of this *sefer*.

We gave several days to the organization of our caravan, which was made up of a number of attendants, a military escort, eighteen camels, asses and horses. At last, on the twenty-seventh of July, we set out across this inhospitable country. For three weeks we traversed one of the most picturesque and most desolate countries in the world. Wherever water is available one finds the imposing ruins of ancient towns. Even in regions now completely abandoned there appear the remains of immense cisterns, wide cemented pits, fortifications and irrigation systems. Particularly notable is the reservoir of Safsaf, close to Cyrene. This town, so important in antiquity, is even to-day rendered imposing by its ruins and by the long rows of tombs cut in the rock, suggestive of lines of booths. Death has triumphed over Life—desolation over the glory of old. This *knissia*, or ancient necropolis, hewn out of the rock, contains tens of thousands of sepulchers. There are numerous Greek inscriptions, and side by side are found the Jewish symbol (the seven-branched candlestick), and clusters of grapes, pears, the cross and the fish, the symbols of primitive Christianity. What could show more clearly than these inscriptions, found in a country where Judaism agonized in the

early years of the second century, that Christianity took strength from the political and national disruption of Israel after the destruction of the Temple and the suppression of the revolt against Rome?

All the hills that we passed were covered with immense granite tombs, so that from afar they appear like vast cities—but they were cities of the dead. To what people could these massive tombs have belonged?

The nomadic tribes indigenous to this region, who preserve the traditions of the past, are totally ignorant of Greek antiquity, but they all explain, with surprising consistency, that these ruins and cemeteries are partly Jewish and partly Christian, the Jewish predominating. Jews and Christians have alike disappeared from these regions for more than a thousand years.

The Auergehrs, a powerful nomad tribe of the Berber Arabs, undoubtedly descended from the ancient Auriga, who seem to have given their name to Africa, always pitch their tents on these ruins of Pentapolis. They can recount the exploits of the ancient Pharaohs, or kings of Egypt; of the descendants of Jalut (the Goliath of the Bible), or settlers of Palestine; of the children of Haymar, the son of Abraham—who came from Arabia. They speak with more knowledge of the Rumi, or Christians, who once went throughout this country as evangelists —but they know nothing of the glories of Hellenic antiquity, which was powerless to leave its mark on the life of the African aborigines. "The Wisdom

of Javan," the product of welfare and luxury, vanished with the disappearance of material and physical well-being, and even Cyrene, the name of the celebrated fountain of Apollo, has been forgotten—despite the Greek inscriptions sacred to this god still visible over the rocky entrance to the long subterranean river. The famous fountain, concealed amongst the dense shadows of the ancient trees opposite the heights sown with tombs, is known to the Arabs of to-day as Ain Shahat. At one time, they assert, prior to the arrival of the Mussulmans, this district was occupied by Jews. Jews, moreover—if these Arabs may be believed—occupied all the strategic towns scattered along the Roman road still to be seen stretching across the plateau as far as Syrte. Settlements of this sort attributed to the Jews are as follows: El Miluda, a deserted town which dominates the road from Derna to Cyrene. Here I saw burial grottoes with *noballemes*, or *homyantes*, inscriptions and symbolic designs. Near this town lie the ruins of Gueba, the ancient Eghopolis, as a Greek inscription in the vicinity revealed to me. Then comes Garna, far-away echo of the name of Cyrene (Kyrene), beyond the *knisia*, or ancient synagogue. At the foot of the plateau lies Marsa-Susa, the ancient Apollonia, the port of Cyrene; at a little distance is Tolmeita, the ancient Ptolemaeus, to-day the home of the Senussiya—where a Jewish community existed in the middle ages, according to the statement of an Arab author.

To return to the plateau, tradition assigns a

Jewish origin to Dernis, and lastly, to Massa, situated a day's march from Cyrene. At Massa, too, there are grottoes and ruins with Greek inscriptions. On one of the latter I was able to distinguish something that looked like an *etrog* (citron) and a seven-branched candle-stick. From Massa onward the route was picturesque in the extreme. Across waterless regions, the mountain passes and valleys, mantled with cedar and with wild olive, lead to the ruins of Kan-el-Kedem. This point is the key to the strategic position of the plateau of Cyrene. It is astonishing to find that the traditions of the natives, who, for more than ten centuries, have been out of the range of Jewish influence, tell stories which are in entire agreement with the exact historical accounts, which state that at one time the fortified points which guarded the routes from Libya were peopled by military colonies of Jews; that these Jews were able to withstand the onslaughts of the Romans (in 74 and in 115–118 C.E.); and that finally their total disappearance was due to the war of extermination of 115–116 C.E. But can we be sure that these settlements were entirely wiped out? Did not their ascendancy amongst the Libyans render it possible for at least a remnant of them to take refuge among the Berbers, there to continue in the exercise of political power? Were this established as a fact, it would be the solution of a problem which has occupied me for many years. This is the situation: on the outskirts of Pentapolis, close to Bengazi, there still existed in the time of Procopius, in the sixth century, a town called Borion. Not far

from this town there used to be an independent Jewish colony which claimed King Solomon as its founder—to which period they attributed also their synagogue.[30] Belisarius conquered the place and forced the Jews to adopt Christianity and to turn their synagogue into a church, doubtless as a punishment for their resistance.

These are the facts and the traditions as they stand. They open up new horizons beyond our knowledge concerning the fate of the Israelites among the Berbers. Kesr-el-Kedem is at the end of the plateau. We passed through an arid region where the various tribes, naked and savage, are at one another's throats for the possession of a ditch of muddy water. Not until we got to Merj, which dominates the agricultural district of the same name, did we find the one fixed settlement of the interior. At Merj there were some ten Jewish families, who did not feel themselves to be in a very secure position.

After a three weeks' march across the plateau, we reached Bengazi, richer by the knowledge of a new country and by various scientific discoveries. The plan to colonize Cyrenaica seems to have no future. The lack of water, which could be supplied, as in ancient times, only at great expense and with much persevering effort, daunted the members of the ITO. It was inevitable that a political matter such as this should be liable to change with the political situation.

While we were occupied in the interior of Cyrenaica, the Young Turks had been granted a constitution.

[30] Procopius, "De Aedificiis."

It was not until after our arrival at Bengazi that we learned of the departure of Marshal Rejeb Pasha for Constantinople and of the outcome of the revolution. We hastened back to Tripoli, which was seething with political unrest. On our arrival we were met by the news of the sudden death of our friend Rejeb Pasha, who died on the very day of his appointment as War Minister of Young Turkey. This was an irreparable loss to Young Turkey as well as to the Jewish people, to whom he had been a great friend. In 1910 the Italians proclaimed their suzerainty over Tripoli and Cyrenaica, to which they gave again the name of Libya, which it had borne in ancient times. Its future is bound up with that of modern Italy. A new chapter is opening for the Jews of this vast region.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SHALIAH FROM THE HOLY LAND

In the pretty little village of Homs I had for a room-mate a *Shaliah* or *Haham* from Jerusalem, a being held in the highest veneration among African Jews. I had the opportunity to observe at close range this species—the influence which they exert during their life-time and which survives even their death. And my latent sympathy—which had become all the warmer, as in the remoter regions of Africa I myself had often been taken for an itinerant *Haham*—had given me a juster conception of the true rôle of these *missi*, who century after century have borne the tidings of the Promised Land to the most obscure parts of Africa. Dining with him at one table, and sharing one room with him, I could observe at my ease the treatment accorded the *Shaliah* by the Jews. At meals the *Haham* is the first to break bread, distributing the pieces amongst those present, just as he is the one who eats first and who delivers the benediction or the *berakah* over the wine-cup before it is passed round.

Not only in Homs, but in other places, the women are not allowed to come to table, except in the case of certain emancipated families; and it is only after the meal that the unhappy creatures pluck up the courage to approach the holy man. Timidly they

would kiss the hem of his flowing sleeves, and ask his blessing on themselves and their offspring. In some places the men are as eager as the women. There could be nothing more ludicrous than the spectacle of a merchant, with the build of a Samson, whimpering like a baby, and imploring: "Oi, Rabbi, give me your blessing. I am so afraid of the *ain hara* (evil eye), I am so afraid."

And the Rabbi distributed blessings interspersed with cabalistic formulas, and money passed from the hands of those who received them to the master of the house, who had the great honor and also the expense of entertaining the Rabbi and of making a blessing dwell in his house.

From the sublime to the ridiculous is only a step. For these emissaries from Palestine, who throughout the centuries have penetrated into the remotest corners of the dark continent, serve as a link between the diaspora and the Jews of Palestine. A large part of the Jewish populations of the interior of Africa owe the preservation of their Judaism to these men, who bear to the inaccessible corners of the earth greetings from Zion, news of all things Jewish, memories of the past and hopes for a glorious future. It is true that among the missionaries there are some who abuse the authority which the sacred memory of Jerusalem has given then. Knowing that they have a poor and miserly population to deal with, the *Shelihim*, who find the collection in some village not of satisfactory size, sometimes make use of the dangerous

weapon of the *herem*. A *herem* coming from Jerusalem! What terror it inspired in these primitive souls! For example: shortly before my arrival at Msellata, a rabbi from Palestine had taxed the town, which was in a state of wretched poverty, the sum of six thousand francs. The people were very loath to pay it, but under threat of a *herem* they managed to collect the money. But though there are many impostors, there are also many fine and pious rabbis who bear faith and consolation to these unhappy people. I met many of these poor men, poor wanderers, accompanied by a *shammash*, riding on an ass or a camel across the desert sands, and pushing their way through the mountain fastnesses.

Everywhere the *Shaliah* is deeply venerated. I was present at the *halvaiah* (leave-taking) of the *Haham* who was leaving Homs for Zlitin. The master of the house assembled all the asses in the town and selected for the use of the rabbi a superb mule, covered with splendid trappings. The whole community turned out to speed the holy man on his way. The moment of parting was really touching. They kissed the hem of his *kaftan*, they touched lovingly the rug on which he was seated; with tears in their eyes they implored his blessing. The Mussulmans passing by saluted him respectfully; the *Shaliah* is *haram* (holy), and they too are happy to receive the blessing of the Haram-esh-Sherif, the holy rabbi of Jerusalem. At last the men returned sadly to their homes, while the head of the community and the most prominent men accompanied the holy man as far as the oasis

of Zlitin, where all the Jews impatiently awaited his coming.

These are the flowers which strew the path of the *Shaliah*, but there are also thorns. Often the rabbi is obliged to travel for hundreds of miles across the desert, where there is no water and where the heat of the sun is deadly. Not all the Mussulmans are friendly towards him, and even the Jews themselves are in certain parts cold and inhospitable. In the interior of the desert there is a species of petty Jewish despots, who appropriate to themselves the revenues of the poor rabbis, and rob them of the honors due them.

Moreover, certain of the Jews of Africa are superstitious and violent, and neither their own faith nor the influence of these *missi* have been able to enlighten them. In this connection a rabbi of Tiberias told me the following incident: One day, shortly before Passover, he was on his way from the Jebel Gharian to the village of Iffren. Owing to an unavoidable delay, he was still on the road on the evening of the Passover half an hour before the time for prayers. He encountered a number of Jews, who, to his amazement, deliberately avoided him, but a Berber accosted him and invited him to his house. The poor rabbi was completely at a loss. In a few minutes the holiday would begin, and here he was without any of the facilities for celebrating the festival. The Mussulman master of the house brought him *mazzot* and everything else which was necessary for the *seder*. The rabbi spent two unhappy days, fuming at this

extraordinary inhospitality on the part of his coreligionists. And during these two days not a single Jew came to see him or sent word to him.

On the evening of the second day of Passover, the rabbi was astonished to see a mob of Jews, men, women and children, in front of the house. "Rabbi," they cried, "forgive us. You know that the fault is not ours. You know that we could not do anything else. Such is the custom of our ancestors."

And the rabbi learned that in these out of the way places a curious superstition, the origin and causes of which are not very clear, had sprung up, forbidding the entertainment of a stranger during the two days of Rosh Hashanah and the first two days of Passover.

One of the major evils to which the poor *Shaliah* is subject is the fierce greed of the desert robbers, who are convinced that he always has in his possession moneys collected from the Jews. Along the road from Derna and Msellata to Tagmut, in the heart of the Great Atlas Mountains, are scattered the white, monumental stones which mark the graves of these wandering rabbis. They are the martyrs of the synagogue of Jerusalem, who gave up their lives in the patient fulfilment of their sacred duty.

It is true that they have their bad side as well as their good one. They have added a vast number of superstitions current in the North and in the Orient to those which are native to Africa. But in their own way, they are a wonderful type. They carry on their work with a steadfast spirit which neither persecution nor suffering can shake—day and night,

praying, blessing, inspiring others and themselves with faith, until death overtakes them in the midst of their labors. Some meet their death at the hands of the brigands, and others fall a prey to disease. Sometimes travellers who come across the dead body of a holy man carry it to the nearest Jewish house, and point out to the faithful the spot where they found it. And the Jews bury the body there, placing a white stone over it, and sometimes they rear a whole mausoleum on the spot. The dead rabbi is now a Jewish *marabut.* The tomb becomes a center of pilgrimage for the poor, who light oïl lamps by the tomb to invoke the aid of the saint, and for the sick, who flock thither praying for a miraculous cure—even for the Mussulmans.

And then legends begin to gather round the grave of the saint; miracles and prophecies and fulfilments are told of; strange figures are seen to steal at night from the tomb. After a generation the exact date of the rabbi's death is forgotten; old legends and new mingle about his name, and the *marabut* becomes a prophet of old, a spirit which dominates the whole region. Awed into belief, the Arabs and Berbers, the most superstitious people in the world, begin in their turn to honor the rabbi's grave, and jealous that so holy a place should belong to the Jews, they take advantage of their greater numbers to drive the Jews away and appropriate the sanctuary. Often they build a mosque about the tomb, still keeping the Jewish name of the saint. And often his name is forgotten, and he becomes a Sidi Mo-

hammed, the name which is used for the anonymous saint of Islam. I know of no greater human sorrow, of no anguish more acute than that of the Jews of Africa, when the saint who has been their guiding spirit, their pride and their consolation from times immemorial, is taken from them by the Mohammedans. And so tenacious is the hold which the dead have over the living, that often entire Jewish villages have gone over to Islamism, simply because their dead saint has been seized by the Mussulmans, and, as Jews, they would no longer be permitted to come to him on a pilgrimage.

But not all the saints have been taken away from the Jews. Indeed, only recently, Joshua Corcos of Marrakesh re-obtained for the Jews the tomb of Rabbi David Halevi, near Dra'a, which the Berbers had seized. He had a mausoleum built about the tomb. Ailing Jews came thither from all Atlas, and on the thirty-third day of the Omer thousands resort to the tomb to celebrate the Festival of the Dead.

Poor, unhappy rabbis of the Holy Land! I have lived as one of them, I have shared their sorrows, and tasted the joy they feel as bringers of good tidings to an afflicted people. Once, when I was in the heart of Atlas, I fell ill, very ill. I was disgusted with my past life, and weary of civilization. There I was, dressed as a rabbi of Jerusalem, in a country into which a European never comes, and where even the native lives in constant fear. Somehow, from having played the part, from having passed for a *Haham*, I began to feel myself, nay, to believe myself, one of the wander-

ing rabbis. When my fever came upon me, I was seized with a sense of the vanity of the things of to-day, and I felt almost reconciled to the death that I thought was approaching. Lying there, I drew up my testament as follows: "If you should find me by the roadside, bury me there, and place on my tomb a white stone with this little inscription: 'Here lies —, son of —, a *Haham* of Paris.'"

This death was not destined for me. I recovered as if by a miracle, and returned to my labors and my illusions.

CHAPTER XIV

THE JEWISH MERCHANTS IN THE SAHARA

The traditions of the Jewish trader in the Sahara stretch back to biblical times. The Talmud and the Midrash mention various articles which were imported into Palestine from Libya, such as donkeys, silk-worms, etc. At the beginning of the ninth century the caravans of the Rodanite Jews traversed the desert in every direction. During the middle ages the Jews were able, in the face of constant persecution at the hands of the Mussulmans, to maintain commercial relations with every part of the desert as far as the Sudan. These relations continued unbroken down to the middle of the last century. Throughout all the centuries it was in Tripoli that the Jews were best able to maintain their commercial supremacy. Since the whole trade between the Sahara and the Christian Mediterranean was in their hands, the Jewish merchants of Tripoli strove continually to ensure the security of the routes leading to the rich Sudan, and to this end took an active part in the political life of the country from earliest times up to the reign of the Karamanli.

Formerly the Jewish merchants of Tripoli exported the following articles to Italy and Turkey: olives, barley, pelts and leather, rugs, saffron, dates, ivory and ostrich feathers, and imported hardware, corn,

cloth, haberdashery, salt, tin, etc. These imports they sold in Tripoli to the natives, who came from every corner of the Sahara to buy.

The largest trade, however, was done with the Sudan, which they supplied with articles of European manufacture, as well as of local Jewish manufacture. The latter include richly embroidered robes of velvet caftans, girdles and slippers, perfumes, ornaments and arms.

In the middle of the nineteenth century there were two hundred caravans passing every year to and from Tripoli and Fezzan, Burnu and Timbuctoo, each one with two hundred to a thousand camels laden with merchandize. They carried various articles of apparel, arms, perfumes, salt, hardware and ornaments, and on their return journeys brought back ostrich feathers, ivory, precious skins, and other products of the tropics.

The Jewish merchant of Tripoli has a very good reputation. The Turks would rather have dealings with ten Jews than with a single Arab, or Greek, while the desert tribes, even those which are traditionally hostile to the Jews, would rather do business with a Jew than with a Mussulman. The Jew of Tripoli puts reliability before everything else in his transactions. Even to-day, when conditions have almost ruined his business, his reputation remains untarnished. A widely published statement illustrates the spirit of these men:

"During the panic in the ostrich feather trade, a merchant was ruined. To meet the demands of the

creditors he brought them even the jewels of his wife. The father of M. L. had lent seventy-five thousand francs to one of his nephews, who had established himself in business somewhere in Africa. The latter lost his entire fortune in speculation. M. L., uneasy about his loan, telegraphed his nephew, but received no reply. Months passed. He gave up the money as lost. Then, one day, he received a thick sealed envelope. He opened it, and found seventy-five thousand francs accompanied by a simple note in Judeo-Arabic: 'Mine I have lost, but yours is sacred.'"

The organization of the trade with the Sudan shows that the Jewish merchants of Tripoli are lacking neither in initiative nor in daring. When, towards the middle of the last century, the Turks succeeded in pacifying the rebellious mountain tribes, the golden age began for the Jewish traders, and lasted for thirty years. This was the time when the feather industry had not yet been opened up in the Cape, and was practically confined to the Sudan. The merchants formed themselves into groups in order to organize caravans. Caravans consisted of several hundred camels laden with articles of European and local manufacture. A *rais*, or trusted agent, was put in charge of the caravan and its several hundred drivers, black and white.

To ingratiate themselves with the desert chieftains and the princelings of the Sudan, the merchants sent along for distribution among them some of the regally magnificent costumes which were their special weakness. There would be mantles of fine linen, trimmed

with rich laces and tassels as large as a man's hand; doublets of Moroccan leather encrusted with gold; wide pantaloons lined with yellow silk; shoes and saddles of velvet, and saddle-bows of wrought steel.

For months the long caravan wound through the desert, past the oasis of Ghadames or Gath, pausing only at the infrequent wells. Occasionally bands of wild Tuaregs would descend upon them. At last they would come to Fezzan, then to Burnu, to Wadai and to Timbuctoo. The biggest buyers would frequently be the princelings themselves, who would often take a direct part in the bartering. Everything now depended on the *savoir faire* of the *rais* and the humor in which the Sultan or the Sheik happened to be. If all went well the caravan would return at the end of a year, bringing ostrich feathers, ivory and gold. A successful venture might mean a profit of as much as two hundred thousand francs.

Things have changed since those days. Since the insurrection of the Mahdi in the Sudan, 1883–5, Tripoli has lost a good deal of its commerce. England built a number of railroads along the coast of the Sudan which deflected a part of the trade towards Egypt. As a result a number of Jewish merchants left Tripoli and settled in Khartum, where they formed the community which is to be found there to-day. In addition, the occupation of Tunis by the French has turned towards the Jebel and the other centers of southern Tunis a large part of the trade of the Sahara. When Tripoli passed into the hands of Italy, there

were not more than eight merchants in the town of Tripoli carrying on any trade with the Sudan.

In connection with the activities of the Jewish merchants in the Sahara, it is interesting to note the unique privileges that they enjoy even among the tribes that are most hostile to strangers. Through regions where a Christian could not set foot without being killed, a Jew may pass in absolute security—in Libya as well as in Morocco.

The desert is full of visible and invisible perils. Man is as cruel as nature, from which he must wrest his existence. Bands of famished nomads beset the traveller's path and menace his possessions and even his life, and equally dangerous is the blazing hatred of the religious fanatics. Woe to him who, without having established any sort of understanding with the natives, or without a thorough knowledge of the country, ventures into these solitudes. Yet, in conditions like these, the Jewish merchant of Africa has been able to establish himself, keeping steadfastly to his faith and traditions; he has been able to establish friendships, nay, blood-brotherhoods, which have assured him freedom of intercourse with many peoples. These friendships alone can enable us to understand how the Jewish merchant may go in safety through the desert even as far as Fezzan and Ghirza, and move with the utmost security among the wildest tribes to be found in the inaccessible Syrte or in the farthest limits of Nefussa.

But side by side with those friendships which the Jews have been able to preserve during their immemorial

sojourn in this country, there have also been perpetuated hatreds and animosities which have been transmitted from father to son for countless generations. And, indeed, as far as the Jew is concerned, the desert is divided into two great ethnic camps—the camp of the friendly, and the camp of the hostile races. If the first may be looked upon as "Abrahamides," the second may be regarded as analogous to the Philistines and Amalekites—in fact, one might almost reconstruct in Africa a Greater Palestine.

Greek and talmudic writers already knew that the traditions of these races connect them with the biblical epoch. However this may be, there are whole peoples in Africa which believe, like those of the time of Procopius, a Greek author of the sixth century, that their ancestors came originally from Palestine, whence they were driven out by the Israelites. Many of the Berber tribes believe even to-day, as they did in the time of Ibn Novairi, one of the most ancient Arab writers, that they are the descendants of the Philistines who fled before David. They say that these far-off ancestors of theirs, in flight with their King Jalut (Goliath) into Africa, passed through Egypt, and there founded in the oasis a city which still bears the name of Gath, and which is to this day a famous Berber center.

This sort of legend has a very real effect on the economic and social relations existing between these people and the Jews. The Berbers of Gath have always been firmly convinced that they were descended from the Philistines. It was dangerous enough, in

former times, for any Jew to penetrate into the circle of their oases, but woe to him who happened to bear the name of David, the traditional enemy of the Philistines. For the people of Gath have remained, above all the people of Jalut, the enemies of the people of David. The Majmuda and the Brabers of the west are part Philistine and part Amalekite, and it is as such that they are spoken of in the writings of Ibn Ezra, etc. They are the hereditary enemies of Israel—they cannot forget "what Amalek suffered at the time of the exodus from Egypt," or the inflictions put upon them by the first two leaders of Israel. To these tribes isolated in the desert, their traditions, handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, are reality itself, they bridge over time and space, making these peoples one with their ancestors of a thousand years ago, and bringing together tribes from the ends of the desert. And, as with the Arabs of old, it is always the ingenious biblical account from which the genealogical lists of the native tribes are derived and which determine their sympathies, their loves and their hates.

There are others besides Philistines and Amalekites in Africa. In the Jebel Nefussa, a few days' march from Tripoli, there may still be found the descendants of the congeners of Israel. They share with their coreligionists of the Isle of Jerba and of the Mozabites the honor of claiming descent from Moab and Ammon. Forgetful of their ancient, fratricidal hatreds, these Mozabites look upon themselves as brothers of the Israelites, and are therefore very friendly to the Jews.

But there are certain tribes of the desert which consider themselves bound to the Jews by even closer ties. These are the peoples which, with more or less justification, claim a Jewish origin. At one time they professed Judaism, but, as the result of either persecution or indifference, they have deserted their faith. Mussulmans though they now are, they still retain certain customs which point to their Jewish origin, while some still marry only within the tribe. In most cases these Hebrews by race and Mussulmans by faith seek to hide their origin, which has become a burden to them. But the desert has a long memory. Ten centuries after these conversions certain tribes, nay, the inhabitants of certain sections of cities, were pointed out to us as Yahudis—Jews. Numbers of these Islamized Jews may be found everywhere: among the Ureshfana, the Brami, the Ghariani, in Tripoli; you will meet with them among the nomads of Algeria, the Masmata, the Smul, the Hanansha, the Traras, the Kabyles, the Muajerin, the Tuat, as well as in the east among the Uled Nun of the Moroccan Sahara, among the great tribe of the Daggatuns, who dominate the routes to the Sudan, and even further. Non-Jewish by faith, but conscious of their ethnic origin, they are particularly cordial to the Jewish merchants. Very often the Jew is the sole link between these tribes and the outside world. He is often their counsellor in perplexity and their arbitrator in disputes.

PART II

THE THREE JEBELS OF THE SAHARA

CHAPTER I

IN THE COUNTRY OF THE CAVE-DWELLERS

BENI-ABBES

Tripoli and the neighboring oases lie between the Mediterranean and the Sahara: a realm of sands, of dunes stretching away to infinity. At one point, however, the coast is covered with vegetation, linking up with a fertile zone extending from Lebda to Terhuna—forming an entire hinterland, a lofty plateau hundreds of miles in length, cleft by deep ravines into three mountain districts. This is the Jebel, celebrated throughout Tripoli. It is from the Jebel that the Jewish caravans come down; it is, in fact, the original home of most of the Jewish population of the sea-board—yet it is rarely that an inhabitant of the coast ventures inland towards the mountains.

Of the mountain settlements of the desert the nearest is that of Gharian—or cave-country—while further south there is Jebel Iffren, which still has a Jewish population. This Jebel is itself only the rampart of the immense Jebel Nefussa which stretches through an eight-day march as far as the frontier of southern Tunis. My knowledge of the interior of Libya was confined to the information brought back by writers of antiquity and to the allusions occurring in Jewish literature. I knew that at one time there was a

people dwelling in these caves—as the Greek authors tell us; that in the days of Flavius Josephus this people claimed descent from Apher, son of Abraham; that, elsewhere, several groups of cave-dwelling or mountain Jews, lost sight of amongst the Berbers, still maintained their existence—the remnants of a once numerous people, leading here a most primitive life, but still clinging to their ancient traditions.

The cave country of Gharian had a particular interest for me. The writers of ancient Greece already knew of cave-dwellers, living in parts of Libya and Ethiopia, who practised circumcision. Others[31] have classified them as Hebrew-speaking Syrians. Arab tradition, agreeing with Josephus, connects them with Apher, son of Abraham, whereas Jewish tradition affirms them to be descendants of the Hori[32] (cave-people) of Idumea. Among latter-day travellers Barth still reports that the Jebel Gharian is peopled by Jews.

On the fifteenth of August I re-entered Tripoli from Cyrenaica. Firmly resolved, despite all the dangers which this journey presents, particularly in the summer season, to penetrate into the Jebel, I called on the Vali Rejeb Pasha (governor-general) to remind him of his promise of a permit to travel in the Hinterland. His Excellency explained that some of the Italians, hearing of my excursions into districts from which Europeans are rigidly excluded,

[31] Philistorgius, Hist. Eccles. III, 6 P.

[32] חורי.

had expressed their unbounded approval of my project, but he himself advised me, in view of the dangers of the journey, to set out with the utmost caution. However, should anything untoward befall me en route I had only to wire him to obtain his protection through the various officials whom I would find in the interior.

It will be seen later how this tacit permission was to involve me in various adventures which were often far from pleasant. I submitted to every condition, happy to be the first modern Jew to penetrate into this Hinterland of ancient Libya.

In order to reach the Jebel Gharian, the traveller must make a two days' cut across a sandy desert. For this journey I hired two camels together with their drivers.

On August the sixteenth, at dawn, our little caravan, consisting of Rabbi Mordecai, the camel-drivers and myself, set out under the palms. I perched on the back of a gigantic camel and was jolted about in a rhythmic fashion, which after a time I began to find quite pleasant.

As the sun mounted over this vast desert sea, the heat became scorching. On every side of me waves of yellow sand passed onwards in regular ranks, broken by the faintest quiver of the burning winds. The camels, in their rhythmic and tediously slow march, kept on thrusting their monstrous hoofs into the shifting sands with exasperating deliberation. From time to time we would come upon a little oasis with rare palms growing round a well of bitter water.

We camped on one of these islands of the desert and were lucky enough to find some juicy melons with which to refresh ourselves.

Midday: the heat becomes suffocating and terribly oppressive. We urge the drivers to liven up the pace of the camels, but they decline to do so. Taking advantage of our isolation, these two savages, cave-dwellers of the Gharian, seem for all the world to be making fun of us, and our confidence in them begins to evaporate. They lie down at full length by a water-hole and refuse to get up again; they demand more *flus* (money), they exasperate us by the cries of "Yehudi" and "Rumi," with which they belabor the camels. I resort to the only weapon at my disposal, my poor umbrella, which I break at last over the back of Ramadan, the younger guide, an utter fool and degenerate. This measure has a salutary effect on Ahmed, the older driver, an imbecile, but quite good-humored. He assures me that the inhabitants of his native village claim to be of Jewish origin, that every one of them holds the Jews in high esteem—but all the same I was not to be confounded with a man like Rabbi Mordecai, for obviously I am an "effendi," or lord of some kind.

Decidedly these two troglodytes are not calculated to inspire one with confidence: true degenerates, deceitful and cowardly, they prove that degeneracy is by no means the specialty of civilization. At times they seek to ingratiate themselves by the queerest sorts of flatteries and cajoleries.

Arabs pass by, gloomy and sullen as the desert:

then come two Tuaregs of Ghadames, the most fanatical xenophobes in Africa. They stop. Ramadan, the young fool, is anxious to impress them with the importance of my person. He accosts them and explains carefully that he is serving as guide to a great "effendi" (lord) who is bearing the "Salam" (greetings) to the Jews of the mountains. Some of the children of the desert are visibly impressed by me; but others, less kindly disposed, remark that an "effendi" of such importance would not travel without an escort. Besides, in their general contempt for Yehudis, it is beyond them that a real noble should be carrying greetings to a pack of wretches considered by their neighbors as inferior beings.

From a few words which they let drop I learn that these citizens of the desert, jealous of their independence, and sworn enemies of the "Rumi" (Christians), absolutely refuse to take me for a Jew. Considerably disturbed, I made up my mind to push on with all speed for the Jebel. But suddenly a terrible wind, a "samum," engulphs me in billows of sand, which scorch my face and take all the strength out of me. Happily we find some bushes on a piece of rising ground. I take my bournous and make a little tent out of it, to shelter myself from the torrents of sand. But even under the cloth I breathe nothing but burning sand: with every breath my nose and mouth are attacked by a fiery flood.

At last the wind dies down. We resume our march as far as the oasis of Quidah, the seat of a Turkish commission for the surveillance of the Ure-

shfana tribe. In deference to Rabbi Mordecai's earnest plea against passing the Sabbath in a place where there are no Jews, we push on without a halt across a plain somewhat less arid than the one which we just traversed.

After a painful march of fifteen hours, we see before us the summits of the Jebel Gharian, and the green palms of its ravines. To the great distress of my friend, the sun disappears, and the Sabbath eve overtakes us in the open country of Ureshfana. I decide against continuing the march through the moonless night.

Around us are acattered the *maajel*, or enclosed courts, where the Ureshfana camp out at the time when the figs are gathered, and sing their songs, monotonous and sad as the spirit of the desert.

Observing that we had entered a greener and more inhabited district, Rabbi Mordecai insists on our stopping behind the hedge of an *ajila* or camp of Ureshfana. The members of the tribe come out to inspect us, and offer us their protection. We learn that this powerful tribe claims a Jewish origin. Genealogic tradition—and every African tribe must have its genealogic traditions—has it that their ancestor, Ursha, having wedded the Jewish Princess Fanana, became the founder of the tribe.

After a deep sleep in a *maajel* or *ajila* (orchard) of the Ureshfana, under guard of a fierce white dog, we rose at dawn. Our little caravan, with its guide and camel-driver, climbed slowly up the plateau. We arrived at last at the foot of the Gharian, in a

picturesque ravine, thickly wooded and abounding in springs.

We rose with the morning and continued our march toward the mountain, till we came to a spring in the shelter of a grassy hollow. We were now at the foot of the Jebel Gharian. This is an irregular plateau, five or six hours' march in length, descending north-east toward Msellata. The Kasr Gharian, the Turkish stronghold which dominates the Central African route, rises to a height of five hundred meters. The valley, with its luxuriant vegetation kept green by a clear spring, leads to a ruined Berber fort, opposite which lies the village of Beni-Abbes. Behind the village can be seen the Wadi Rumana, which leads to the foot of an extinct volcano. Not far from the volcano, whose crater is still visible, is the Wadi Um el Nehel, thickly set with date-trees and dominated by a Roman mausoleum rising out of ruins. The red soil is rich and damp: the palm-trees, the saffron plants, the superb quality of which Leo Africanus already vaunted in his time (XVIth century), the fig-trees, the pomegranate trees, and here and there the vines, first cultivated here by the Turks, all bear witness to the fertility of the soil.

Beyond the village of El Kasm the country-side becomes even more radiant. The village of Gelili is famous for the exceptional quality of its vineyards. But the richest and loveliest country of all lies toward Tigrena, a district bounded by the Wadi Ran, and justly famous for its dates. Here, in the Kasr Tigrena, there is a Judeo-Berber stronghold. Beyond

that we came to Mount Kubba, from which the crest of Mount Tiji (720 meters in height) is visible.

This entire region, placed in the open desert, is distinctly Mediterranean in character, and has a dry and temperate climate; it is only lack of water which stands in the way of colonization on a vast scale. The population, which numbers some two thousand souls, is concentrated about the following points: Beni-Abbes, Chiuda, Bu-Slama, Sualin, Hushene, Hosce-el-Jehalda, El Kasm, Tigrena, Gehissa, etc. Local tradition, which is in accord with the theories of Barth and others, states that at one time the whole of this region was occupied by Jews; today they occupy only two of the villages, and their total number is about a thousand souls; several abandoned villages still bear Jewish names (such as Mussa, Arun, Gedeon, etc.). Excavations made in the cemetery at Gehissa have supplied us with fragments of Hebrew grave stones. The Mussulman population, which still practises the Amalekite rites, falls into three groups: native Jews who have become converts to Islam, such as the inhabitants of Bu-Slama; Arabs in fixed settlements, such as the Beni-Abbes; and, lastly, the Berber Arabs.

In front of us loomed a rocky eminence, crowned by the ruins of a Berber stronghold. A little further on, to the rear of the ravine, we discerned the flourishing plateau of Beni-Abbes, the first village of the cave-dwellers.

Very soon we were scaling the wild crags, reaching ever higher and higher. Finally a red plateau,

dotted with fruit-bushes, but utterly devoid of any trace of human habitation, unrolled before our eyes. A strange spectacle this—hills and fertile valleys, where, except for an occasional ruin or mosque, not a sign of a human habitation showed above ground, where the dead were entombed above the earth, and where the living dwelt in scarcely discernible subterranean caves. We wondered what sort of reception we would be accorded by the fanatical population.

Eager to look into the life of this curious corner of the earth, we passed by the Arab village of Beni-Abbes, and proceeded, still on foot, into Yehud Beni-Abbes, the village of the Jewish cave-dwellers. At a spot where the reddish ground sloped slightly upwards, we came upon a group of young Jewish women, very white and slender, who seemed startled by our sudden appearance on the scene. We looked with admiration at these daughters of the cave-dwelling Jews—at the mobility of their features, their natural poise, the graceful folds of their bright hued garments.

Then came along a number of men bronzed and strongly built. They with surprise recognized the Rabbi of Tripoli, who, appearing suddenly in their midst on the Sabbath, must have seemed to them to have dropped out of the very skies. Their astonishment seemed to be augmented by the fact that he was accompanied by an effendi who greeted them in Hebrew. In vain did we look amongst the palm-trees, the olive-trees, the fig-trees—not a trace could

be seen of any habitation, not a vestige of the caves we had heard so much about.

The appearance of the *Shohet*, Saïd Shinani, who hailed Rabbi Mordecai as an old friend and extended a very cordial greeting to us, seemed to mark the end of our difficulties. We looked once more over the undulating plateau around us: at the olive trees, the fig trees, rare palms, the open fields; at the loungers, women clad in colored stuffs, men in bournous—in the distance, a mosque half buried in the earth. Then we discerned a number of square holes, great pits almost concealed by the red hillocks around them; we could hear the wailing of infants, the lowing of cattle, the shrill cries of women, all issuing from the depths like the voice of the Sybil. Then we approached a hole, opening in the side of a hill like the entrance to a cave. But, as a matter of fact, a wooden door was opened for us by a wooden key, with which Saïd fumbled in the lock, reminding me of the biblical *man'ul* in the Song of Songs. We found ourselves in a sort of dark, uneven gallery, burrowed in the red soil, which led ever downwards, and which long habit alone could teach one to pass through without mishap. At the end of about fifteen or twenty yards we found ourselves in a court, illumined faintly by rays of light slanting in from above. This was the stable, into which our animals were taken, and which preceded the central court of the human habitations.

Obviously everything is calculated among these cave-dwellers, as Herodotus already noted, with an eye to baffling the marauding bands who infest the

surrounding desert; if these should invade the village, they would have the greatest difficulty in penetrating into a cave irregularly cut out and hidden from view. If, despite all precautions, a number of them should succeed in surprising the cave inhabitants, it would be better that they should first come upon and seize the cattle, although this comprises the sole wealth of these primitive people, and that the lives of the human beings should be spared. The same consideration accounts for the fact that the Jewish smiths and jewellers have their places close to the stables and in front of the walls. In this country of lawlessness and rapine, the individual always keeps in mind the biblical axiom: "Take all my possessions, but leave me my life..."

We continued the descent by a straight passage, keeping to the side whence the light came, and we reached a square subterranean courtyard, fairly well lighted by a patch of sky visible at a depth of about ten or twelve meters from the surface of the earth; this provided all the light and air for the inhabitants. This court, which resembled a well in its rectangular depth, fulfilled the purposes of a central dwelling-place, a kitchen and a factory; the living-rooms, which were in caves either cut out from the walls themselves or dug out from the level of the subsoil, received a little of the light and air of the court. We were not exactly suffocated, but we must admit that we were not altogether comfortable, whereas the natives consider this underground life perfectly natural and even commodious.

Our host received us with the utmost cordiality. He was a handsome fellow, of a pure, brown Southern type; he was a *Shohet*, although almost entirely ignorant of Hebrew, having learned his profession from manuscript treatises in Judeo-Arabic. Like all the Jews of the Jebel he was a peddler during the slack season, a field laborer and gardener in the busy season and a blacksmith in between. His wife wove *ganduras*, or girdles, like the women of the Bible.

The news of our arrival spread through the village: men and women, all of a perfect type, which the underground air had failed to mar, came hurrying into the cave. The men gave us greeting, "salam," and the women kissed our hands and called us "Rebbi." We observed that here the Jewish women enjoyed much more liberty than in the oases near the coast. Even the young girls, who in Tripoli must cover their faces, here go unveiled, without any constraint; the women sit side by side with their husbands on the ground, for chairs and tables are entirely unknown. We took a sip of *oraki*, or date-brandy, of local manufacture. We were informed that the Jews are the only makers of these beverages, but that they themselves are also the largest consumers. This is characteristic of Jews of African origin; in a country of sand and sun they are very prone to indulge excessively in liquor and in the red pepper plant, which, with its sharp taste, they like almost as well as alcohol.

After a refreshing glass of *lagbi* (date-tree juice)

we climbed back to the surface in order to inspect the village and its surroundings.

Yehud Beni-Abbes is on the very margin of the desert which lies between the oasis and Tripoli; the village comprises two hundred and forty inhabitants, who take up six underground courts. At one time the Jews were very numerous in this country, holding most of the land and defending it successfully against all invaders. We were shown the fertile ravine, which ends in a well watered valley and which commands the approach of the region towards Tripoli. Here, on the slopes, we found grottoes and traces of mines of an ancient civilization. We were led across spaced-out fields, and were told that all of this splendid country belonged at one time to the Jews. But towards 1840 the plague ravaged the Jewish population; the only survivors were four families of Beni-Abbes, while many of the neighboring villages were completely wiped out.

The Ulad Beni-Abbes Arabs took advantage of the unhappy plight of the Jews to deprive them of their lands; the rightful owners kept on struggling against the invaders, but to no purpose; besides this, the Arabs, with that meanness characteristic of the servile *fellah*, took possession of the cemetery, the resting place of a whole line of ancestors, and ploughed it up. They could not have conceived a more malignant act, nor one which would have wounded so deeply the "infidels," who now, with tears in their eyes, led us across this field which contained the desecrated remains of their ancestors and their rabbis.

The Arabs, however, had not dared to dispossess the last native Jews entirely; they managed, instead, to force them into a collective ownership of the whole village, so that the Jews, having no distinctive property of their own, are yet forced to till fields and cultivate fruit trees belonging exclusively to the Mussulmans, and at a distance from their homes. The outcome is that the Jewish farmer must look on, without daring to protest, while his Arab neighbor appropriates the first-fruits of his olive-groves and the best produce of his own plot of land, which is swallowed up in the vast Arab fields.

Even this did not satisfy the oppressors. There is in the village an ancient synagogue, a sanctuary held in deep veneration. It is situated in a hollow surrounded by an open court, and its roof is colored like the soil in order to conceal it from view. This spot affords them the only moral gratification they have; it is the one meeting place where they can offer up their prayers or pour out the plaints of the *Piyyutim*, which mourn the sorrows and proclaim the hopes of Israel.

The fanatic Mussulmans, jealous of this sanctuary, planned, after the desecration of the cemetery, the ruin of the synagogue, on the pretext that the neighboring mosque would, according to Mohammedan law, be profaned by its proximity.

Fortunately, there were judges in Tripoli and money in the hands of the Jews. By a happy chance the Jews have in their possession a document which proves that the synagogue was in existence on its present

site five hundred years before the foundations of the mosque were laid, that is to say, seven or eight centuries ago. The administration, basing its decision on the right of priority, was able to rescue the synagogue, to the unbounded joy of the Jews. Looking through the Geniza of this sanctuary we found, among other things, a tablet dating from 5359—that is, 348 years old. Surely these Jews, swallowed up in the Sahara, have deserved a better fate. Nowhere would there be found better proof of the moral superiority of our race, which holds firm even in the most primitive conditions.

In the caves of the Jews everyone must work; the men are blacksmiths before the time comes for work in the fields, farmers in due season, and itinerant merchants during the period of unemployment. The women weave *ganduras* for the natives and work in the fields and orchards. The children help their mothers and tend the animals.

Among the Arabs the filth and stench are simply indescribable; they are so lazy that, were it not for the Jews, who lend them seed, provide them with implements and urge them to their work, they would never get anything done. It is true that the entire existence of the Jew is dependent on the goodwill of his Arab customer, for the Jews are the only artisans in a country where money is hardly known. Generally payment is made in kind, so many bushels of barley, of figs, or of olives, and that not according to work done, but according to the success or failure of the crops. But it is just as true that the Arab

must tolerate the Jew because he cannot do without him; without his labor, his energy, and his initiative life would be impossible in a country where laziness is a tradition.

The life of the Jews of the cave country is primitive in the extreme. They are generally content with barley bread, with dates and figs, with *cus-cus* and with *bazin*. White bread, which comes from Tripoli, is an unheard of luxury, even during the festivals, which are rigorously observed. To make up for it they over-indulge in date-whiskey and in red pepper.

Almost every Jew possesses an ass; and again the Arab shows his unspeakable malice. On Saturday the Arabs, insisting that there is no reason why the beasts should lose a day simply because the Jews do so, appropriate the animals and set them to work.

Through everything the Jews cling faithfully to their traditions; they still believe in the coming deliverance of Israel, and look forward to better days.

This is all the more surprising in view of the prevailing ignorance. The Talmud Torah, where a single instructor teaches reading, has sixteen children, but the Rabbi and the Shohet are as unlettered as the pupils.

We return to the cave of Saïd, our host, for the night. Here among the mysterious mountains of Libya, in a cavern fifteen meters below the surface of the earth, suffocating for lack of air, a prey to vermin—here, fifty centuries away from civilization and modern man, I passed a sleepless night. I meditated on the evolution of human civilization

and on the strange lot of Israel among the nations. Now more than ever did I feel my close relationship, my brotherhood, with these cave-dwellers, with these prehistoric people snoring around me.

CHAPTER II

TIGRENA; THE RABBI OF THE CAVES

The next morning, after attending morning prayers and partaking of a light breakfast, we mounted our camels to continue our journey. We had hardly left the village, when a young Jewess, who was busied in picking the figs from an enormous fig-tree, motioned me, drew near and offered me a handful of fresh figs, saying courteously: "Hod, Rabbi, hod!" ("Take, Rabbi, take!").

I thanked her and, true to my rôle of Rabbi, blessed her as best I could. The young woman, deeply moved, kissed my hand, as was fitting to my rabbinic dignity, and disappeared among the trees.

We continued our rhythmic march across the picturesque hills and valleys of the Jebel Gharian. The soil of this region is red and exceedingly fertile, and there is an abundance of water. As we went along, the invigorating wind tempered the heat of the African summer which had caused me so much discomfort in the lowlands. The further south we advanced from the Turkish administrative center, the more frequently were the signs of cultivation: the vine flourishing in abundance on this vast mountain oasis in the heart of the desert. The remains of ancient ruins looked down from hilly eminences, while

the young fruit trees scattered here and there bore witness to human habitations.

What a strange sensation it was for me to traverse this prehistoric district where, in place of villages, one found only cities of the dead!

I was impressed by the fact that in these regions, sundered from all civilization, the living have counted for nothing during these many centuries, and that only a superstitious dread of desecrating the tombs has permitted these cave-dwellers to leave the dwellings of the dead open to the sky.

But another thing impressed me, as a Jewish traveller: wherever I passed, at Gehissa, at Bu-Slama, at Ishe-Imis, I was shown Jewish memorials; there, opposite me, was a whole group of abandoned Haras, the populations of which have either been wiped out by Mussulman fanatics, or decimated by the plague, or, like that of Bu-Slama, lost to Judaism, during long years of ignorance, in the Mussulman mass; and an infinite brotherly pity welled up in me at the sight of this wretched remnant. They are the survivors of the two Jewish groups who inhabited Beni-Abbes and Tigrena, the latter a city lying in a pleasant valley clothed with magnificent forests of olive-trees.

These Africans, dominated as they are by the most tenacious of superstitions—the cult of the dead—have been indeed sorely tried in the most sacred of their sentiments. Not only are the living, reduced as they are to an insignificant minority, maltreated by their neighbors, but even the dead, the ancestral

remains so sacred to them, have ceased to be respected, particularly during the latter generations. Indeed, the desecration of the Jewish cemeteries, so characteristic of the petty malice of the Arabs, who no doubt sought thereby to make the Jews forget their seniority in this country of Libya, is one of the most tragic spectacles.

But the beauty of nature drove away these bitter reflections. Before me, in the picturesque, flowing valley, lay the Jewish village of Tigrena, surrounded by fig-trees and olive-trees.

After a march of three and a half hours, we came upon a square building, dominated by a rather squat cupola and—which is strange enough in these parts —rising clear above the soil.

This was the new synagogue of Tigrena, which the population was anxious to have built above the ground. Apparently civilization is advancing, even in the country of the cave-dwellers. However, I was shown an ancient synagogue, highly venerated, which was situated underground, and which reminded me of the one at Beni-Abbes. I made a tour of the village, with its twenty subterranean courts and its 650 or 700 inhabitants; in the synagogue I found a young man by the name of Ebani (עבאני) Hajaj, who was teaching some forty urchins to read Hebrew.

But I looked forward with impatience to the arrival of the most important person in the district, Rabbi Halifa Hajaj, the Haham Bashi (Chief Rabbi) and physician of the Gharian, the only one in the village who can speak Hebrew fluently.

He was away at the market, which is held every Sunday at Ksar Gharian, and someone had gone to look for him.

Meanwhile we proceeded to the underground home of the rabbi of the caves. His wife welcomed us respectfully and brought us the inevitable draught of *lagbi* (date juice), which refreshed us.

Men were scarce. Nearly all of them were at the market, but the news of our arrival having spread even as far as the market place, the foremost citizens hurried back to bring us a brotherly "salam." Less than an hour after my arrival there were already more than a dozen of my coreligionists returned from the market, all of a fine, dark type; they surrounded us, and poured forth all their troubles and all the details of their life.

I was informed that our host, Rabbi Halifa, who was still absent, was descended from a family of physicians and rabbis which immigrated from Morocco more than seven centuries ago; that one of his ancestors had even succeeded, in the days when the Jews were still numerous in these parts, in rising to the headship of the Jebel Gharian. They showed me in the distance the *Kasr* (fort) of Tigrena, dominating the village and bearing inscriptions in Hebrew and in Arabic which testify to the curious fact of the Jewish supremacy in the Gharian.

They told me further that Halifa had never taken any course in medicine, owing all his knowledge to his ancestors and to manuscript treatises in Hebrew-Arabic. He is a physician of great ability—the only

one among the Mussulmans of the district. His fame has travelled as far as Tripoli, whither he has been called on two occasions, to perform surgical operations which were crowned with success. Like the Rabbis of the Middle Ages, he draws his whole income from his practice, and discharges his rabbinic functions without any compensation whatsoever. His success has only succeeded in making him an object of jealousy to the fanatic Mussulmans and rapacious officials.

In this country, cut off as it is from all effective supervision, and separated even from Tripoli by the desert, the religious head of the Jews has on two occasions been the victim of false accusations on the part of certain of his coreligionists who also practised medicine, and has suffered the most savage persecution—which completes his resemblance to the Jewish savants of the Mussulman mediæval age.

But his ability, his probity and his large humanity, which are the admiration of friends and enemies, finally overcame these jealousies. A commission of physicians from Constantinople finally put a stop to all these annoyances. This self-taught man obtained from the medical commission the official permit to practise medicine.

As I was learning all this, Rabbi Halifa himself appeared in the courtyard; he greeted Rabbi Mordecai warmly, and kissed my hands.

I looked at this Rabbi, this survivor from the middle ages, recalling so vividly the doctors of the Arabian period: of small stature, but of venerable appearance,

with large brown, lively eyes, a long beard, and a lofty forehead, which gave him an imposing air. He was some fifty years of age, but hardships and an eventful life had left their mark on his face.

Just now he was happy; it was the happiest day for him, he told us, as host, since the untimely death of his only son, who left a little boy, now the one consolation of his life.

Our appearance seemed to throw him into confusion; he was unable to show me sufficient respect and friendliness, and he ended by showering on me a whole flood of benedictions and cabalistic conjurations with which he adorns his medical knowledge.

We conversed in Hebrew, which this rabbi of the caves spoke fairly well, while poultry strutted on every side of us, a young he-goat skipped about, asses brayed and several black sheep rubbed against us—all this swarming at the bottom of the underground pit where the rabbi's wife was busy preparing a meal over a fire lit in a heap of stones in the form of a primitive oven.

Men, women and children, beasts and fowls, garbage and smoke—all moved and mingled restlessly in this pit, into which a glowing strip of the sky threw a deep blue light which seemed to envelop the entrance to the dwelling.

After I had satisfied his curiosity as to the condition of the Jews in the far north countries, Rabbi Halifa invited me to dinner in his "drawing room," a cave cleaner than the others, where a curious spectacle unceasingly unfolded itself before my eyes.

At the entrance there was a *mezuzah;* near that hung a piece of ground glass; through this the doctor examines certain cases of illness. Inside, on a plank suspended by the wall, I discovered a number of manuscripts in Hebrew and Arabic and even some printed books. On the floor was laid a straw mat, and a beam, which served as a table when any patient had to lie down.

But still stranger was the opposite wall. There, in place of an ornament or painting, stood a straw chair battered and worn out. This chair, Halifa told me, he brought from Tripoli in order to astonish everyone with a luxury unknown in this country; my umbrella, moreover, broken as it was, did not fail to evoke amazement by its complicated mechanism.

We seated ourselves on the mat. On my special behalf Halifa laid down a little cushion; he placed the beam at my side to serve me as a table. We spoke of underground life, and my host stated his conviction as a doctor that caves make much better habitations than do the houses in Tripoli: in winter they are not as damp, in summer they are not as hot. As for light and air, living in the heart of the Sahara where there is a little too much of these, one does not object to the reduction.

Seated on the ground, we prepared to dine. I was given a portion of warm barley-bread, of roast chicken seasoned with red pepper, and some red wine; the others sipped eagerly at their *araki* or date whiskey. The rabbi's wife brought in a large clay dish full

of a thick broth, glimmering with oil and abundantly overflowing the rim.

This is the *bazin*, the national dish of the Sahara. It is made of barley meal mixed with oil, strong pepper and goodness knows what else, which gives it a yellowish, unappetizing color. I overcame my distaste and, a wooden spoon having been found by good luck, I took a taste, and found the dish too sharp, too fat and too heavy for my European digestion. I decided firmly against going on with it. And my decision was an excellent one. I had hardly drawn out my spoon when twenty hands—one hundred fingers—of very questionable cleanness, were thrust into the dish. Each one took a handful of broth and squeezed it through his fingers, until the oil oozed out, mingling with the perspiration and forming a highly original mixture. They told me amiably that the *bazin* is only good after it has been mauled about between their fingers for several minutes, and that it is only after this delicate treatment that it acquires a really delicious taste.

As I declined firmly to follow their example, these people regarded me with feelings of alternate pity and vexation. "This *bazin* is *mazon* (nourishment) itself," someone told me dogmatically. But I did not give way to their importunities, happy to find a moment in which to examine at leisure the manuscripts on the plank, among which a collection of local Piyyutim particularly attracted my attention.

CHAPTER III

AN EVENING AMONG THE CAVE DWELLERS

The sun began to set. The burning African heat gave way to the refreshing shadows of the evening. The guests departed, this one for his anvil, that one for his loom, and ascended as it were into space, followed by the boys. The women came in from the fields with baskets of fresh figs. We proceeded to the synagogue for the *minhah* service. Tigrena boasts two *zla*, or houses of worship: one entirely subterranean, the other lifting its roof of *pisé* (rammed clay) above the level of the soil. Prayers were said in the deep yard surrounding the building. Then we ascended a knoll overlooking the neighborhood. We sat down for a chat till the hour of *'arbit* (ערבית). How many of us were there? About a score of men, including two or three Mussulman neighbors, who, in Africa, mingle everywhere in Jewish life with that indelicacy which is characteristic of the natives. A number of women—who are excluded from divine service—remained somewhat apart, seated on the brink of a dwelling-pit.

I observed this world around me, and conversed with Rabbi Halifa, while my interpreter, Mordecai, expatiated with enthusiasm to several prominent members of the community on the object of my travels. I interrogated the Rabbi in regard to the beginnings

of the Jewish settlements in this cave country. Savage invasions and devastating wars, replied the Rabbi, had robbed them of their ancient documents. There are in the district numerous villages where one may find traces of deserted Haras and of Jewish cemeteries now abandoned. The ancestors of the Jews of the cave country have transmitted the tradition that in very ancient times the Jews formed the majority of the population, but that wars and epidemics decimated their numbers. There were, moreover, frequent conversions to Islamism for many generations. And, in addition, as a result of the frightful epidemics, a large part of the Jewish population of the recent generations had preferred to leave the Gharian in order to settle in the oasis on the coast of Tripoli.

"As for my family," continued the Rabbi, "we know with certainty that the first ancestor of the Hajaj family came, some seven centuries ago, from Maghreb-el-Aksa (Morocco). Like myself he was a physician and a rabbi, but he was no less a warrior. He took part in the struggles which were then laying waste the country, and, having taken possession of the Tigrena fort, which dominates the country-side, he succeeded in having himself proclaimed the chief of the Gharian.

"For several centuries our ancestors governed the country; then came the Ishmaelites (the orthodox Arabs, as opposed to the heretical Berbers); with them came bloodshed and pillage, which were destined never to leave our unhappy country. Our family was gradually impoverished, declining in

numbers and in importance. To-day all that is left to me is my medical practice, and the honorary title of Haham Bashi, or Grand Rabbi, which was already borne by my grandfather.

"But God is just; misfortunes of every kind have beset me. I have been denounced to the authorities for the illegal practice of medicine; I have even tasted the sweets of a Turkish prison, the *zekut* (merit) of my fathers (peace be with them) delivered me. I lost my only son; but God was merciful. He has been pleased to leave me his child, who is my only heir, and my one consolation.

"May it be His will to deliver us from the hand of the Barbarians, to take us out of the *Galut*. Amen!"

Thus spoke Rabbi Halifa.

I followed up my inquiry concerning the local traditions of the Jews and the abandoned Haras. I found that there are numerous Jewish families of Tripoli who came originally from the Gharian, among them the Attras, the Hassans, the Hajajs, the Seroz, the Abbani, the Bahdish, the Saduebs.

Among other things Halifa told me that of the heroes of the Jewish wars, local tradition has preserved the name of one Arun ben Arun. It appears that the father of the Rabbi read in one of the caves in the Jebel Nefussa an inscription in Hebrew characters which bore the following legend:

"Ana Arun ben Arun, ya Rejaba, etc." "I, Arun son of Arun, who delivered his people in battle..."

A number of the men present spoke with me on the precarious position of the Jews of the Sahara.

They complained of the arbitrary treatment which the minor Turkish officials mete out to them on every occasion, of the humiliating attitude of the neighboring Mussulmans, who are one of the most degenerate races it has ever been my lot to meet.

Their complaints were bitterest against the *askeria* duty, a tax for exemption from military service, which the Jews are forced to pay in kind, in a country where the natives are excused from army service.

While they were pouring out their complaints to me, an Arab, who had just come from the Kasr Gharian (Turkish fort and administrative center), thrust himself into our conversation and announced solemnly that at that very moment an order had arrived from Constantinople, exempting the Jews from the *askeria* in all countries where the Mussulmans are not subject to military service.

Poor people! This announcement, fabrication though it was from beginning to end, was enough to rouse everybody to enthusiasm. Even the women came running up to share in the general rejoicing.

Date whiskey and red pepper, hotter even than alcohol, were brought to celebrate the great deliverance. The Mussulmans, total abstainers when at home, have no scruples about drinking among Jews. As for the bringer of the good tidings, he helped himself to drinks with the greatest freedom, which confirmed, in my eyes, the improbability of his story. It was just an Arab ruse to have a little feast at the expense of the credulity of the Jews.

However, business is business, even among the

cave-dwellers. The most prominent men of the village took advantage of our presence to bring up for trial a dispute, or *mahaloket*, which was dividing the community over the question of a *shohet*—for all the world like an orthodox Polish community. It need only be said that this profession, which everywhere else among orthodox Jews calls for talmudic scholarship of more or less profundity, can be assumed in most small Arabian communities at the cost of very little effort. It is sufficient for the candidate to have learned by heart a few pages from a manual in Judeo-Arabic, and to have taken a few practical lessons from an established *shohet*. This post, while carrying no remuneration, is very much sought after as an honorary title. The result is constant squabbling and rivalries in the midst of the communities.

A dark young fellow was brought before us as the defendant. A cave citizen of advanced years upbraided him for not having examined his knife before slaughtering a kid. He demanded, therefore, in the name of the law, that the practice of the *shehitah* be absolutely forbidden this young man.

The onlookers were divided into two camps. They vociferated, shouted, swore, insulted one another. The uproar was terrific, such as only Orientals could make without coming to blows. Finally our authority prevailed, and we had the young man reinstated in his post.

The arrival of a new personage put an end to this scene. A Jewish itinerant merchant from Nefussa,

returning from Fezzan, gave me some very lively details of the mode of living and of trading of the Jewish itinerant merchants, who follow all the routes of the Sahara and face all the dangers which infest them. As for the Jews of the Southern Sahara and of the Sudan, he did not remember ever having met them, but he assured me that there exists, at least in the east Sudan, a black-skinned population which some call the Felici and which are generally known among the Tuaregs as the Krit. They observe the Sabbath and are known to be of Jewish origin.

This picturesque evening, from which I had gathered such a rich harvest of facts and observations, taught me one thing more.

In these inaccessible regions of the Sahara the "vendetta," or *lex talionis*, still reigns supreme. Already at Msellata I had been able to observe a case of vendetta between a tribe of ordinary Arabs and a tribe of Shurefa, noble descendants of Mohammed.

Because they had seen one of their number slain by the Arabs, the Shurefas, the holy descendants of Mohammed, massacred forty of their neighbors, and would have exterminated them to the last man had it not been for the energetic intervention of the Turkish government, which does not permit too much of this sort of thing in its territories.

The further south one goes the ruder become the customs, and the bloodier the vendetta. Local tradition attributes the disappearance of villages to acts of the vendetta.

Indeed, it only suffices for a Mussulman to have been killed by a Jew, even by accident, for the whole village to find itself faced by the terrible alternatives of expatriation or extermination. Fortunately, the Arabs of the desert, who are the laziest people in the world, are, in their love of money, not behind their coreligionists of the towns, and nothing is more natural, in a case of this kind, than the blood redemption of the murdered man, which his family permits for a consideration and which finally puts an end to hostilities.

The most curious thing is that the vendetta is not unknown among the Jews. However, it must be said in justice to them that, as among themselves, one never hears of assassinations. But between Jews and Mussulmans it is different.

Formerly, when the Jews were more numerous, they did not let a single case pass without avenging the blood of one of their number, and whenever it came to a question of punishing an Arab tribe, the Berbers were ready with effective coöperation. To-day the Jews and Berbers of the Gharian are powerless to exact reprisals from their Arab neighbors, who outnumber them overwhelmingly.

But what the Jews of the Gharian have retained is a certain courage, which is characteristic of a large number of them. I was introduced to a Jew by the name of Hai who scours the desert, and whose heroic exploits are the terror of the degenerate natives and the Turkish authorities.

Several years ago some Arabs surprised, in the

open desert, a brother of Hai, a young Jew, whom they murdered on the spot. His elder brother, who, by right of vendetta, was bound to avenge him, and who is known for his courage, swore solemnly to take vengeance on the entire family of the assassins. For many years this avenging brother has scoured the desert routes, and has lain in wait for his prey. Every time he succeeds in surprising a member of the family which he holds responsible for his brother's death, the avenger murders the man on the spot. Three of the aggressors are already dead, but the savage avenger is not appeased. It would have been vain for me to have sought to dissuade this primitive man from a purpose which he had made the aim of his life.

CHAPTER IV

THE POETRY OF THE CAVE-DWELLERS

The Jews of the caves are not without intellectual ability; nor is literary activity unknown to them. In a country which is not merely primitive but actually prehistoric, this in itself is a striking mark of the superiority of our race.

The Jew is the representative figure of the land, the sole artisan and merchant. Himself the worker *par excellence*, he even knows the secret of bringing out the productive power of a native population which is undoubtedly the laziest in the world, and compared with which the Arabs of Morocco and of Palestine are models of industry.

But over and above all this he does not neglect the life of the intellect and the spirit. He knows the sanctity of the Sabbath and of the festivals, and in the twilight of his caves he observes these as do his brethren the world over.

His family life has the purity of Jewish tradition; to this is owing the general perfection of type, the physical endurance of the men, and the whiteness and grace of the women, which distinguishes the Jews of the Gharian from their Mussulman neighbors.

In a country of utter indolence and improvidence, he alone has knowledge of, and practises, economy, and though it is true that the little he thus saves up

often arouses the jealousy of his neighbors, it often stands him in good stead.

But the unique possession of the Jews of the Gharian is their poetry. They have their poets who sing of the past, their local versifiers as well as their writers on *Cabala*.

In the Geniza of Tigrena all that my researches brought to light was a collection of local piyyutim in bad condition and an inscription on the coverlet of a Torah dating from 5319=1559. But Rabbi Halifa was kind enough to present me with his own extensive collection of the poetry of his people. This I shall treat of in a special study.

Here I shall state only that among the authors represented in this collection figure several poets born among the cave-dwellers. I was overhasty in adjudging the Moroccans, Mandil and David Hassan, natives of the Gharian, but undoubtedly several of these poets (Mahluf, Calfela, Mussa ben Hassin, Nathan Ghaian, Halifa) are the singers of the cave-country. My researches have revealed that the eighth century was the golden age of Jewish poetry in the Gharian.

But the outstanding feature of this poetry is the evidence of the profound influence exerted on its not very learned authors by the Arabic language. This influence affected even the vocabulary and the pronunciation of the rhyme.

The majority of these literary products are liturgical in character, but there is also a considerable number of occasional verse.

Cardoso's announcement of the advent of the Messiah was one of the main sources of inspiration. The poor people believed in him implicitly, perhaps believe in him to this very day, for I have found among them poems dedicated to Sabbatai Zevi and to his prophet Nathan.

One of the poems begins as follows:

חנון ,יא רחמאן, גיב לנא משיח, מעהו נתן, חנון

"O gracious and Merciful God, send unto us the Messiah, and with him Nathan..."

The poems dedicated to young married couples are of a purely lay character, and are often marked by a lyric swing and easy versification. There are even several very ardent love poems, but, as in the case of the Song of Songs, the transcriber, refusing to see simply love poems in them, has assimilated them to the symbolic imagery of cabalistic mysticism which is found in the hymns of the later synagogue.

Here is a specimen rich in local color:

"How delightful are thy loves to thy friend. There is none like to thee for beauty. O thou, purer than pure gold, grace and majesty are thy ornaments: straight and slender as the palm-tree: stately as a wall, my beautiful beloved.

"Thy loves, like so many graces, contend for me. Thine eyes are those of an Ishmælite who flings burning arrows, but thy mouth is that of an Israelite. Thy teeth are lustrous, like precious stones. Thou art lovely and pure..."

Thus, even in this tropical country, the purity and

the beauty of the Jewish maiden remain unblemished —as the poet of the country attests.

But the poets of the north have even today their followers in the Sahara. And one of these is our friend Halifa himself. In his youth the Rabbi was wont to write secular poetry, but with the increasing wisdom of years he turned back to the true poetry of Israel, that outlet of the sorrows of our people.

Here is one stanza:

"As in former days, I cry to Thee, O God of our people, rebuild Thy house, whilst yet I live. Show Thy miracles, and restore us to Zion. Deliver Thy people from their affliction among the nations. Then shall we sing and be joyful."

Judeo-Arabic popular poetry covers a wide range of subjects, folklore, legends, traditions, which have to be studied on the spot. One of these popular songs bewails the miseries of the young Turk of 1840–1850 and the sufferings of the Jews.

I was able to piece together several details of the history of the Jews of the Gharian in the nineteenth century. The years 1835–1850 witnessed the insurrection of the Mussulmans of the Jebel against the Turks. The Jews were implicated both as smiths who manufactured arms, and as providers of troops. In 1841 Jebel Gharian was restored to peace. The Mussulman cave-dwellers, fearing reprisals, sought to exonerate themselves by throwing the blame on the Jews. They adduced in proof that the head of the Berber insurrection, Ghoma, had been the patron of the Jews, that Jewish smiths had manufactured

arms for the soldiers, and finally, that the Sheik (head) of the Jews, Chomani Hajaj, had, in his medical capacity, tended the wounded in the camp of the rebels.

The Jews succeeded in exonerating themselves of these charges. The Turkish governor understood that, being in a minority, they had been unable to stand out against the demands of the rebels. He appointed Chomani Hajaj Haham Bashi (rabbi) of the Jews and physician to the wounded Turks. Today his descendant, Halifa Hajaj, still wields these functions. In reprisal the Turkish general exacted a fine of 40 *okia* of saffron, the most precious product of the Gharian.

These incidents, together with the outbreak of an epidemic which decimated the Jews, was the cause of the decline of their numbers in the Gharian. A large part of those who escaped the sickness emigrated to Tripoli.

I kept in touch with my friends of the caves. At the time of my second stay in Tripoli I learned that a quarrel had broken out in their midst, and that a rival to Halifa had been set up among his own people. Then, in 1910–12, followed the period of the Italian occupation, and once more the Jews suffered from the state of anarchy into which the Jebel was thrown. In 1911 I received a letter from the Rabbi of the caves filled with lamentations over the unhappy fate of his flock. He writes:

"The condition of our brethren who live in the caves is terrible. For years we have been suffering

from famine. Many fathers of families have left rather than suffer any longer, abandoning their wives and children to the community. Though we have never known what it is to live on *zedakah*, we have founded a relief society, but what can we do against so many misfortunes? Even the schools are closed for lack of funds... Could you not do something, at least for the pupils of the Talmud Torah?"

When I left Tigrena, Halifa insisted on accompanying me as far as the outskirts of the Gharian. We passed by Bu-Zein, the first village with houses above ground. The children are in the habit of throwing stones at passing Jews. Here Halifa was recalled to attend to a sick Arab. He took a warm leave of me, giving me his blessing, mingled with cabalistic formulas. And thus I left the country of the cave-dwellers.

CHAPTER V

JEBEL IFFREN

There is a tradition common to all the Jews of Tripoli that they are the direct descendants of captive Jews from Palestine. One of the generals of Titus, called Phanagorus in the Midrash, is said to have transported some thirty thousand Jews into the mountains, and there established them as tillers of the soil. This is said to be the origin of the present Jewish population.

This is borne out by another tradition mentioned in "Sefer Yuhasin," which tells of thirty thousand Jews established as colonists in Africa. Abraham Halfon, an author of the early nineteenth century, speaks as follows in this connection:

"Among the older people I found a tradition, handed down to them from their ancestors, that at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, one of the generals of Titus, Phanagorus, King of the Arabs, led a number of captive Jews into the mountains two days distant from Tripoli, and there handed them over to the Arabs. From these mountains they came to Tripoli." Those who have remained there are still subject to Arab masters, to whom they pay a small fine every year. A master also has the right to sell his Jew to someone else. It is curious to note that this Phana-

gorus is mentioned in Midrash Ekah (איכה) as having been killed before Jerusalem.

Particularly does this tradition find support in the type of these Jews, in their folk-lore, and in their ways of living, which come nearest to those of ancient Judea. We shall see later that the Berbers themselves look upon the Jews as having formed the first nucleus of the native population.

What strikes the traveller at once is the absence of *Cohanim* and *Leviim* among these Jews. The existence of scholars in the Nefussa at the time of the school of Kairuan was confirmed by the late Dr. Schechter. Even the persecution of the Almohades could not take away from the Jew the important rôle which he played, as is attested by the inscriptions published below, and by the evidence of an Arab author of the close of the twelfth century, who writes:

"There is a large city, Jado, which is the capital of Jebel Nefussa. Markets are held there frequently, and the larger part of the population is Jewish."[33]

A rabbinic passage dating from the middle ages, and attributed to Maimonides, speaks as follows of the Jews inhabiting Jerba and the Libyan Jebel:

"Though their belief in God is firm, they accept the superstitions and the practices of the Mussulman Berbers. Thus they turn their eyes away from an impure woman, looking neither on her face, nor on her body, nor on her dress. They speak no word to her, and are scrupulous against stepping on the

[33] Fragment from the "Kitab el Aduani."

ground which her foot has touched. Similarly, they do not eat the hind parts of slaughtered animals."

These few remarks will show the profound interest attaching to this region of the Jebel, toward which my historian's curiosity drew me.

A march of fourteen hours across a brush-covered desert separated us from the Gharian. We passed by ancient Jewish villages, now desolate. Among others we passed Kiklia, which still has a Jewish cemetery; and a number of *marabuts* (saints) are buried in the shadows of its venerable trees. The Mussulmans who pass these desert sanctuaries never fail to kindle before them a little oil-lamp. Towards nightfall we lost our way, but we were close to a mountainous country, which was none other than the Jebel Iffren, the goal of our journey.

We ascended steadily till we came to a plateau covered with gardens and vineyards. Our attention was immediately attracted by a hedge encircling a vast courtyard. It was now dusk. The owner of the estate, a negro by the name of Mabrush ben Hamed, gave us a friendly welcome. In order to overawe him, my camel-drivers, who were very tired and hungry, solemnly informed him that I was an important effendi sent up by the Turkish government to assume control of local taxation.

We made ourselves comfortable in a tent propped up against a hedge. An attendant brought us a rug, a woolen blanket, and two basketfuls of figs and raisins. I observed that Mabrush escorted Rabbi Mordecai to the fire which was kept burning

in the rear of the yard, and that the Rabbi of Tripoli threw a log of wood on to the flames. Astonished, I asked Rabbi Mordecai the meaning of this strange custom, and learned another curious fact in the life of the desert Jews.

It is well known that the orthodox Jew will not partake of bread baked by a Gentile. But Jewish homes in the desert are few and far between, and as itinerant merchants and other wayfarers cannot go without food, a custom based on a talmudic passage has sanctioned the following procedure, which at once allows the native to extend his hospitality to the Jew and the latter to avail himself of it: whenever a Jew arrives at the fire of the nomad, the latter invites him to light a piece of wood on his hearth-stone, signifying thereby that he cedes the fire to his guest for the duration of his stay. The bread and the other food prepared on this fire are thenceforth considered as being outside the category of foods which, according to the Shulhan Aruk, may not be cooked by non-Jews. I was much amused to observe the punctilious zeal with which our black host strove to keep Rabbi Mordecai from violating the religious law.

Our repast was of the very simplest: warm milk, barley bread still hot from the oven, and fruit.

The next morning we set out again through mountainous country. We stopped to examine a Roman mausoleum, in a state of excellent preservation, rising on a hill opposite the village of Kiklia, and later we came to the ruins of a village which bore the significant name of Cohen.

It is an established fact that in Tripoli, among the Jews of the interior, there are no Cohanim indigenous to the country. The presence of a village bearing such a name in Iffren is a problem which I shall take up later.

We are now in the very heart of the mountains; opposite us rose the amphitheatre of the three Jewish villages of Iffren, El Kasr, El Meanin, and El Dissir.

The dwelling place of the Jews of Iffren is in striking contrast to that of the Jews of the Gharian: the latter have made their homes in underground caverns; the former live high up on the mountain sides, and their settlements call to mind the straggling and irregular villages of the Berber mountaineers, or the hamlets perched on the crags of Judea.

At El Kasr we stopped at the house of the merchant Obadiah, and began our investigation into the condition of the Jews of the region.

The Jewish population of Iffren, numbering some two thousand to twenty-five hundred souls, appeared to me to be a remnant of ancient Judea. Infinitely better informed and further advanced in the arts of life than those of Gharian, the Jews of Iffren have preserved customs and traditions and even a kind of Hebrew dialect which brings them singularly close to the Jews of the biblical period.

Last survivors of a great Jewish population, evidences of the existence of which are still scattered over the whole of the vast Jebel Nefussa, the Jews of Iffren represent one of the handsomest and sturdiest types it has ever been my good fortune to behold.

The women, in their red robes, are particularly striking with their white skins, their graceful figures and their delicate features.

Their social condition is almost on a level with that of the men, and is certainly superior to that of all other Jewish women of the Orient. If the woman, like the daughter of ancient Judea, toils in the garden, weaves at the loom and grinds the barley between two primitive millstones, she at least enjoys, in return, the privilege of being an only wife, of taking her meals side by side with her husband, and of mingling in the company of men. A good mother, a faithful wife, she is her husband's right hand in all his labors. I have myself met itinerant women merchants who travel through the desert, selling small articles to the nomads, with a courage which is only equalled by their moral integrity.

As in ancient Judea, there is wooing by the wells. In this country, where everything is scrupulously divided off, the Jews have their own wells, which serve them as meeting places. I have looked with admiration on these gracious Rebekahs of the Jebel, standing by the wells surrounded by the young men of the village. The occupations of the Jews of Iffren are almost the same as those of their coreligionists of Gharian, except that here there is a little more comfort and well-being.

Even in the opinion of the Turkish authorities, the Jews in this region, which has gone to waste through the indolence of its inhabitants, form the

only industrious and productive element; and this holds true for the whole Jebel Nefussa.

The relations between Jew and Berber are better than those between Jew and Arab, better, in fact, than those between Arab and Berber. Up to the middle of the last century, however, the Jews were considered the serfs of their Berber over-lords. The Turkish government, in doing away with this humiliating institution, has not sufficiently opposed its authority to the countless moral humiliations which the Mussulmans inflict upon their Jewish neighbors.

Here is a typical instance: the Haham Bashi, or Rabbi, of the district, who is more merchant than scholar, his post being more or less honorary, last year made a journey to Nahlut. He was attacked by several natives, who charged him with riding on a mule, for a Jew may not bestride a mount in the presence of Mussulmans. Had he dared to complain to the authorities, he would have run the risk of seeing his people maltreated, or even massacred, by the Arabs.

Nor have the signs of the former serfdom of the Jews been entirely effaced. Until this day the sons of serfs consider themselves attached in some sort to the household of their former masters. A Jew threatened by the Mussulmans has only to appeal to the head of the Berber family which his family once served, to find very effective protection. It is, in fact, a point of honor with a Berber chief to refuse his protection to no one that asks for it, even though he grant it at the risk of his life.

Another point of honor which long usage has made sacred is the natural pride of the Berbers in all matters pertaining to love. The question might well be asked how, during so many centuries of servitude, the Jews were able to preserve their national purity and the honor of their women. Inquiry revealed the fact that there is no greater humiliation for a Berber than to have his advances spurned by a Jewess.

We may thus see how the social inferiority of the Jew actually contributed to the preservation of the race and of its morality. This inferiority was, however, unable to guard the sanctuaries from the desecrations which were particularly marked during recent generations, when the Arab invasions plunged the country into a state of anarchy.

The Jebel Iffren possesses exceedingly ancient Jewish memorials. The inhabitants are without doubt the descendants of those Judeo-Berbers of whom Maimonides speaks, reporting their strange customs in matters pertaining to the purity of the women, and in other usages contrary to the Talmud—customs and usages which have been preserved to this day.

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that these Jews are the descendants of the captive Jews carried off by Titus into Libya. There, in a country so similar to Palestine in climate, soil and social conditions, they were able to retain their ancient language, manners and religion.

The Jews themselves are firmly convinced of their direct Palestinian origin. They even relate that thirty years ago a stone was found near the ruined

synagogue Zlat-es-Sqaq (the market-place synagogue), with Hebrew inscriptions dating back to the first century after the destruction of Jerusalem. This synagogue is believed to belong to a period prior to the coming of Islam, which must be the reason why the Mussulmans hold the sanctuary in such great veneration.

However, jealous that the Jews should possess so hallowed a sanctuary, the Arabs, taking advantage of the general anarchy prevailing in the middle of the last century, burned the place down. All that remains now is the site of the sanctuary, where Jews and Berbers alike kindle oil-lamps.

It was with tears in their eyes that the Jews begged me to restore their sanctuary, which they regarded as one of the six *ghriba* or ancient Jewish sanctuaries of Africa.

Another, a subterranean synagogue, is known as El Kiblia, that is to say, the synagogue of the south, in contradistinction to the first, which is situated to the north. Close to the latter another synagogue was erected in more recent times, where I found an inscription dating from the year 5502 (1742).

In a nearby village, bearing the Berber name of Takrubaiz, I found, in a deserted garden, a ruined synagogue in which there are engraved the names of Guetta, Hassan, Attia and other ancestors or prominent Jews of modern Tripoli, together with the date 5472 (1712).

The ancient cemetery close to the grottoes has

been despoiled by the Arabs, who converted it into ploughed land, to the great grief of the Jews.

Another source of vexation to the Jews is the primitive system of taxation weighing them down. It is true that the Turkish government guarantees them a certain degree of security in return, though even this is tempered by the care of the Turkish government not to offend the Mussulmans, but the Jews who, even in the opinion of the Turks, are the most profitable element in the district, must submit to the most exorbitant taxes, and must put up with the ruinous and arbitrary treatment of the local authorities.

Thus it has come about that the wealthiest families have emigrated into Tripoli, leaving the Jebel poorer than ever.

CHAPTER VI

A PRISONER OF THE TURKS

The reader will remember that I received from the Turkish authorities in Tripoli rather reluctant and unofficial permission to travel in the Hinterland, together with a formal promise of assistance in case of need. At Iffren this need arose.

The nearer I came to the Jebel Nefussa, the more precise and the more numerous became the traditions of the political rôle which Judaism once played in those parts. These traditions are strikingly consistent with the accounts given by Ibn Khaldun, the great Arab historian of the fourteenth century, of the early inhabitants of Nefussa, who, he states, must undoubtedly have professed Judaism. His statement is borne out by other Arab writers.

En route I was shown scores of ancient Jewish villages in ruins, and I encountered countless memorials and traditions in connection with this important historic fact. I was told of inscriptions found on tombstones and of other ancient documentary remains. The figure of Arun ben Arun, the mysterious Jewish hero (undoubtedly a Cohen), as well known to Mussulmans as to Jews, dominates the legends of the country. I was increasingly determined to push ahead and discover what traces there were of ancient settlements.

But to do this it was necessary to obtain the permission of the Turkish and local authorities. The Jebel Nefussa of to-day is an almost deserted country, and there were no Jewish communities there to provide me with protection. I had to apply therefore to the authorities for protection before I could continue the journey. I reported at the Kasr Iffren, a little Turkish fort, which is used as a barracks. There was a café there where the officers were playing at cards and dominoes, their only distraction in this "Siberia of the sun." Around the fort the Jewish merchants have built up several rather pretty streets. My appearance at the Kasr created a sensation. The governor, who received me, was amazed beyond measure. A European at Iffren, without passports and without military escort! "But how in the world did you even manage to pass through the Gharian without being seen? How did you manage to get past so many Turkish outposts without being challenged?..."

Evidently the failure of the outposts to report the approach of a European—an event of the greatest rarity in this country, pointing as it did to a lack of zeal on the part of his men for which he would be held responsible—exasperated this high official, who feared a reprimand from his superiors.

In vain I tried to calm him; in vain I assured him that I had the official permission of the Vali, and that he had but to telegraph to headquarters to verify this. I could not comfort him. He had no idea how to meet this unprecedented situation, but

it must be said in justice to him that he was scrupulously polite to me. He promised to telegraph to Tripoli, and in the meantime he sent for Obadiah, the President of the community of El-Kasr, and committed me to his keeping.

The next day I returned to the Kasr, but the governor was no longer there. His secretary informed me that the reply from Tripoli had not yet come, and he thought that, for safety's sake, it would be better for me to remain in the fort for the night. He saw no reason why I could not continue my researches among the Jews of the village, if I so desired, but he made it a condition that I was always to be accompanied by a Turkish soldier, otherwise the natives would maltreat me, and if anything untoward were to happen to me, the responsibility would rest with the local authorities.

I refused very distinctly to have any Turkish soldier accompany me, as it was my desire to come into close and intimate contact with my coreligionists.

At last the telegram from Tripoli came. It authorized me to travel across the Jebel Nefussa, and while it entitled me to a military escort, it left me perfect freedom of action and of movement.

The secretary of the governor, who, till now, had been on strictly official terms with me, relaxed into the most hospitable friendliness. He brought me coffee, and offered me his *narghile* to smoke. We chatted of a hundred things. Everybody in the fort became exceedingly courteous and attentive. But I was very anxious to be on my way. As I could not

leave till morning, I passed a last night in the hospitable house of Obadiah, where a feast, washed down with much whiskey, was given in my honor.

There, among these coreligionists of mine, in a setting strangely reminiscent of primitive biblical times, the consciousness of my Hebrew origin gripped me, and I felt more than ever the closeness of the tie which bound me to these men, whom the vicissitudes of history had separated from us for so many centuries.

Wednesday morning, accompanied by two Jewish muleteers and Rabbi Mordecai, I left the Jebel Iffren and set out for the Jebel Nefussa.

All along the first part of the route were remains of Roman civilization. One village even bore the name of Rumia. Close to it there was a spring which the natives call Yehudia, and which, judging from the steps cut out in the rock to lead down to it, must at one time have served as a *mikveh*, or ritual bath. Near the spring I observed the ruins of what were once probably the booths of Jewish jewellers.

Toward noon we reached the outskirts of Zintan, a region of many olive-groves. It is a country of cave-dwellers, but it differs from the Gharian in that the inhabitants do not live beneath the surface of the earth, but in caves hewn in the rocks. At one time this region was occupied by Jews. My Jewish muleteer Raphael told me that the natives of Zintan are a very haughty race, bold and untamable, and extremely hostile to strangers. Formerly it was impossible for a Jewish merchant to penetrate into

their country without risking his life, unless he was well known in the country. To-day, thanks to the protection extended by the Turks, Jewish merchants may be met with frequently.

At the little Turkish fort which served as the administrative headquarters for the canton, I presented my letter from the governor to the officer in command. We were taken to the Mudir, or commissioner of police.

This dignitary, who was an Arab of the country and a Senussi to boot, was seated barefoot on the earth, in the midst of a group of Arabs, under the branches of an olive tree. I was told that he was about to give judgment in a dispute between two Arabs. He took the letter and read forth loudly that the governor requested that full protection be given to a *Nazrani* (Christian) traveller and his *Yehudi* (Jewish) dragoman, and that they should be permitted to continue their journey to Fossato.

It was of no avail for me to explain that I was not a *Rumi* (Christian); nobody would believe me. The Senussi commissioner, without deigning to address me, gave orders that I be imprisoned in a little cabin. To make matters worse, they refused to give us any food.

It was impossible to buy anything, for since there were no Jews here, there were neither shops nor merchants. As the climax to our misfortunes Rabbi Mordecai, on whom the hardships of the journey were beginning to tell, fell ill.

Here we were, on the eve of the Sabbath, in a hos-

tile country, the population of which gave me a very clear idea of the meaning of the phrase "the people of Sodom."

The next morning a soldier, who had been told off to look after me, invited us to his house to take tea with him. I never enjoyed anything in my life more than the cup of tea which this soldier gave me. I was grateful to him as much for Rabbi Mordecai's sake as for my own. We began to have some hope of passing the Sabbath in peace.

The natives, however, seemed to have come to quite another decision. As if a last touch was needed to complete the resemblance to the classical picture of Sodom, a crowd gathered outside and angry voices were heard. A number of natives, mostly women and children, were highly incensed with the behavior of our host, and threatened him with the direst punishment for entertaining a *Rumi* in his house.

The soldier talked himself hoarse in his attempts to convince the crowd that I was a *Yehudi.* He succeeded at last in making them believe him. A number of them actually came forward to greet me, assuring me that they had never seen a *Rumi* in their lives, but that, though they knew the Jews were not of the faith, they could not forget that they, too, were descended from the father Ibrahim (Abraham). I did not, however, feel particularly reassured.

Meanwhile Rabbi Mordecai's condition grew worse, and it was impossible to get any aid in this hole. To the utter disgust of poor Raphael, we left the same afternoon. We proceeded on foot till we emerged

on to the plateau of Nefussa, which is split in every direction by deep ravines. The scenery was very beautiful, and I was astonished to discover such a fertile region in the very heart of Libya. Two ancient Jewish villages, Kalaat Zemur and Ulad Attia, were pointed out to me on the way. Late that night we arrived at the Turkish fort of Fossato.

CHAPTER VII

JEBEL NEFUSSA

My appearance in the fort created a great sensation among the garrison. The commanding officer, Ali, a fine-looking fellow, with a frank, open face, put at my disposal a splendid room, generally reserved for the visits of his superior officers. After I had rested from my journey, I was taken to the café outside the walls of the fort, a dingy little place, where the doctor of the garrison and a number of officers sat idly playing cards. The moment they saw me they rose to their feet and came forward to greet me. A European at Fossato! It was incredible! How did I ever get there! It had never been done before! My coming was a unique event in this furnace of a place. They crowded around me, and gave me a hearty welcome—in French!

Oh, these lonely Turkish forts of the Sahara! At Iffren there is at least a little Turkish village; there is a market-place; there is a coming and going of Jewish merchants. And here—nothing! Only this little café, run by an aged exile, who also speaks French. And around, nothing but occasional Berber villages, wild ravines, and the desert. No tea, no papers, no letters, no roads, not even Jews!

Never did the nature of the relationship between the Jews and the Turks appear more clear to me;

never did I understand so well the need which this military, uncommercial people has of a faithful, reliable, industrious element, such as the Jews supply.

"Let them come to us, these poor, persecuted Jews of Russia; we will receive them with open arms," officers have said to me.

"Let them come," said the Kaimakams (governors). "Let them come," I have been told, even by a *mufti* (religious chief).

For to these European Turks, who have received something of a modern education, and to whom the luxuries of a civilized life are not altogether unknown, the Berbers and Arabs are mere savages, from whom nothing is to be expected, and who will never do any work unless they are driven to it by the Jews.

To my utter astonishment I discovered on the very evening of my arrival that Jews may be found even in Fossato. The news of our arrival had spread rapidly as far as the Berber village of Jado, and sure enough, as we were standing outside the café, a bronzed, alert-looking Jew came up to us. His name was Judah, he told us. He was a native of Iffren, who was attached to the Turkish army as a *cantonnier;* serving as intermediary between the soldiers and the natives, and obtaining all necessary provisions for the garrison. Incidentally, he manufactured whiskey for the Turks. He spoke Arabic, Berber, and even Turkish. He was not the only Jew in these parts; he told us that at Jado there were several other Jews, merchants and artisans, who had also come from Iffren. Thus, under Turkish protection, the

Jews are beginning to repopulate the Jebel Nefussa, after having left it for several centuries. For the whole of this great and fertile district, stretching from the Sahara to Tunis, has been one of the theatres of Jewish history. Ibn Khaldun, the great Arab historian, tells us that at one time the Nefussa was practically a Jewish country.

I learned that about twenty minutes' walk from the fort began the ruins of the great Jewish city of Jado, of which we were told by the Jews, and which is mentioned in the Kitab-el-Aduani. I have in my possession several fragments of tombstones, bearing Hebrew inscriptions, which were found in the latter place.

One thing more I learned that evening. The reader will remember that, besides Rabbi Mordecai, there was with me the Jewish muleteer, Raphael. I noticed that in talking with non-Jews, both Rabbi Mordecai and Raphael used a language which at first was altogether strange to me, but in which there finally seemed to emerge a predominant Hebrew note.

On making inquiry I was informed that the language in question was one which the Jews call "*Lashon ha-Kodesh de-Jebel*" (Hebrew of the mountain). In half-an-hour I had mastered the rudiments of the language. It is a mixture of Hebrew and other languages, having a grammar peculiarly its own. For several days I applied myself to it with such assiduity that I compiled a dictionary of this dialect, which I regard as one of the most interesting results of the whole expedition.

It was rather amusing for me, a writer and professor of Hebrew, to become the pupil of these two Jews of the Jebel, one of whom could not even read. The next day I was able to converse in this sort of Hebrew with two coreligionists who could not have translated a single word from the Bible or the prayer-book.

I passed a good night in the room which they had assigned to me, and which was really quite comfortable. The open window gave upon a courtyard which, lying several hundred meters above sea-level, was cooler than most of the surrounding country. I rose in the morning completely rested from the fatigues of my journey. My friend, Rabbi Mordecai, did not recover so easily from the hardships which we had endured.

After breakfasting with the officer in command, I left the fort, accompanied by Judah, Raphael, and a Turkish guard, Abdallah er-Raheibi, a native of the Nefussa, who became my devoted and faithful servitor for the rest of my stay in Tripoli.

Around us lay a country of lofty plateaus and deep ravines. Villages were rare, and rarer still were the tiny patches of cultivated land. And everywhere the ruins of cities of old.

We made our way toward the ruins of the city of Jado, of which the traditions of Iffren speak as one of the most important Jewish settlements of ancient times. We arrived at a hill covered with rows of houses in ruins. There must have been several hundred—a whole deserted city. I noted the remains of smithies, and of the shops of jewelry mer-

chants. I came to the old synagogue, which the Berbers of the district hold in great veneration. The building is almost wholly underground, like the synagogues which I visited at Gharian and at Iffren; the drifting sand had choked up the opening and I had great difficulty in effecting an entrance. I found nothing inside save the almost obliterated outlines of the seven-branched candlestick, that Jewish symbol which may be met with everywhere, but which in Africa is always a proof of the great antiquity of the building in which it is found.

At the other end of this Jewish Pompeii there are caverns cut in the rock. Going through an underground passage almost choked up with sand, I came upon the bones of dead men, and again the traces of a seven-branched candlestick. Without doubt we were now in a Jewish necropolis, of the type of those at Jerusalem and at Cyrene of Gamart, belonging to an age when caves were cut out of the rock, that is, to an age prior to the Mussulman invasion. To my keen regret the inscriptions were entirely effaced.

I was consoled, however, by the thought that the cemetery on the slope of the city facing the fort would certainly contain a number of stones with inscriptions on them, though these, it is true, were of more recent date. Indeed, I already had in my possession a number of stones from this abandoned cemetery with Hebrew inscriptions going back as far as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Whilst I was still in this cemetery an Arab brought me a

stone which he had found near one of the tombs, and which he refused to give up at any price; he looked upon it as a talisman which would bring him good luck.

I decided to do some excavating, but all that I found was a few stone fragments, the Hebrew inscriptions on which simply confirmed those I had already seen. Evidently the stones have all been carried off by the Berbers.

The tombs, all of which face toward the northeast, that is, toward Jerusalem, resemble most of the Jewish tombs in Mussulman countries: small stones ranged along the four sides of the grave, larger stones at the head, projecting through the earth, which covers the rest of the tomb.

A closer examination of the place convinced me that the right side of the slope, separated from this cemetery by a long, deep gash running down to the foot of the hill, must also have served as a cemetery.

Abdallah set to work, and under a deep bed of earth we discovered some tombs constructed quite differently. These were entire buildings of cemented stone in an excellent state of preservation; they must belong to a much earlier period, when the transition was being made from the system of placing tombs in tiers in the rocks, which the Jews had learned in Palestine, to that of ordinary stone tombs. Here an attempt had been made to combine the two systems.

We opened one tomb, but found nothing. In the second tomb we found the tombstone of a Jew,

with an inscription in Cufic Arabic, but of Jewish origin. Here, then, was documentary confirmation of my hypothesis, the proof which I had been so anxious to find. We continued our excavations till it was time to return to the fort. I was quite satisfied with my day's work. The excavations of the cemetery of Jado, the inscriptions which I had unearthed, were not these direct evidence in support of my theory of the existence of Judeo-Berbers?

I went on with my excavations later in the evening. The coming of the Jews to this country has been a recent event, and they were unable to give me any information as to the early history of the Jews in the country. I therefore decided to proceed to the Berber village of Jado, which is situated on a rocky slope at the top of an almost inaccessible *wadi*.

When I came to Jado I was told that the old Sheik, Omar Ashad, had in his possession a number of ancient parchments which formerly belonged to the vanished Jews of Jado. I paid this personage a visit, and found him seated on a reed mat, surrounded by the notables of the city—a white-bearded patriarchal figure.

After exchanging the usual polite formalities with me, the Sheik spoke at length on the subject of the Jews—they who had once been the masters and friends of the Berbers, and whose disappearance from the country occasioned its decline and its ultimate ruin.

He spoke to me of that mysterious hero of the Jebel, Arun ben Arun, and of a great Jewess, the

saint "Umm el Ghrib"—"The Mother of Bottles," whose tomb lies near Serus, two days' journey from Jado. He himself, he said, was a descendant of the Ammonites and Moabites who came with the Israelites from Palestine.

He told me that fathers still relate to their sons the exploits of the Jews of old. The Berbers remember with gratitude that had it not been for the Jews, Jado would have been lost to them; it would have been conquered by the Arabs, like Reheibat and so many other cities. The details of one of these wars of conquest are still vivid in the memory of the natives.

Once, in the days when the Berbers had already been converted to Islam, forming a heretical sect, the Arabs organized a general attack on Jado. It was a Wednesday, and all the Mussulmans were at prayer in the mosques.

The Jews, having got wind of the intended onslaught, did not wait for the return of the Berbers from the houses of prayer, but organized a hasty resistance among themselves. Their heroic efforts were crowned with success and the savage nomads were driven off. The popular song which commemorated this incident is still sung by the natives, hundreds of years after the disappearance of the Jews from Jado and the entire Nefussa.

What was the cause of the disappearance of the Jews from the country? This is a problem to which I have given considerable thought. The Sheik gave the following explanation: The Jews retained their

mastery over the Jebel as long as the Berbers clung to their early faith, a sort of primitive Judaism. Our race was not only the dominating, but the civilizing element, taking the place of the Phœnicians and the Romans. Indeed, it was the Jews of the Jebel who saved the city of Tripoli from conquest by the Byzantines.

Then came the Arabs. The Berbers were converted to Islam, but soon became Abadites, that is, schismatics, retaining in part their former pagan and Jewish beliefs. The pure-blooded nomad Arabs therefore regarded them as heretics and persecuted them mercilessly.

The country was laid waste by unceasing hostilities. The Berbers were demoralized and the power of the Jews weakened. Commerce and industry were brought to a standstill. Communication with the maritime towns was cut off by the desert brigands. The Jewish communities beyond Nahlut—those Judeo-Berbers who are mentioned in the epistle of Maimonides as ignorant tribes—were in this way isolated from the rest of the diaspora. Part of them forsook their ancestral faith and were converted to Islam; another part emigrated to Jerba, Tunis, and the maritime towns, as is proven by the names of many Jewish families in Tripoli, Tunis, etc.

Local tradition speaks of the disappearance of the Jews from Jado as a great calamity for the country, and fixes the date about the year 900 of the *Hegira*, that is, about 1500 C. E. This timing of the event is corroborated by the fact that I have

nowhere come across any tombstone bearing a date subsequent to this year.

On the other hand, several Jews of Jerba, who are descended from the Jews of Nefussa, have repeated to me the following tradition anent the disappearance of the Jews from Nefussa:

About this time (i. e., 900 of the Hegira) the position of the Jews among the natives had become intolerable, and they began to emigrate from the country in large numbers. Whilst the Berbers were unable to do without them and were determined to keep them in the country at all costs, they inflicted the most outrageous moral and spiritual tortures upon them. They believed they could keep the Jews from migrating by forcing Islamism upon them.

Those Jews whose Judaism had become to them nothing more than a few superstitions seem to have allowed themselves to be converted, but in order to prevent the others from leaving the country the Berbers resorted to a device which is still being used by the over-lords of the Jews of Atlas—they would not permit a single woman or child to leave the country.

The Jews, knowing that the Berbers relied on their piety and kept no watch over them on the Sabbath—a day when travelling is interdicted by the Law—decided on extreme measures. Threatened with actual extermination, the Jews of several villages gathered together one Sabbath eve, set out across the desert and migrated to Tripoli and the other coast towns.

This migration dealt the final blow to the prosperity of the Jebel Nefussa. On the other hand, Judaism in the Tripolitan towns was considerably strengthened by this influx of new blood. It is true that the tribes who fled from the Sahara to the coast were ignorant and primitive, but we have already seen that about 1550 they were instructed in the law by Rabbi Simon ben Labi. In this way the ancient Jewish colony of Libya was saved to Judaism.

Tradition among the Berbers tells that at that time the Jews still spoke the Berber dialect of the Nefussa —and there is evidence to-day of the truth of this tradition: that they were an agricultural people, that they were divided into tribes, and that every tribe had its Sheik, or judge.

To-day the Berbers of the Nefussa, unlike other Mussulman peoples, have no *vaquf*, or holy ground, for their mosques. They possess, however, estates, the profits from which go to the maintenance of ancient synagogues, like those of Ghriba and El Kiblia, in Iffren. They still hold in the highest veneration these deserted Jewish sanctuaries, of which they are the self-appointed guardians. Having no saints of their own, they pay homage at the tombs of the ancient Rabbis, whom they call *marabuts*. They have even canonized a Jewess—Umm-el-Ghrib. The Berbers keep fragments of tombstones in their houses as talismans, whereas, curiously enough, the Jews themselves are afraid to touch a tombstone; they believe them to be bringers of evil, and I have never been able to persuade a Jew to keep one of

them in his house. They even have the annoying custom of burying the tombstones in the cemeteries, in order to get rid of them for ever.

Among the Berber customs which are undoubtedly of Jewish origin, the following may be mentioned:

They throw on the tomb of a murdered person a heap of stones, which they call by the biblical name of *Sahad* (Gen. 31.47, Yegar Sahaduta). At harvest time they leave whatever falls from the sheaves or baskets for the poor and for wayfarers. As in the Talmud, the number two is considered unlucky, and nobody will ever drink two glasses of anything. The bride, on entering the house of her betrothed, throws an egg at the corner of the wall, in order to soil it. This custom is also to be found among the Jews of Tripoli and of Jerba, and is intended as a remembrance of the destruction of the Temple. There is even a day when the Berbers bewail the destruction of the Jewish Sanctuary.

The Berbers have no *marabuts*. Their chants and prayers are often imitations of Jewish ritual; some of them keep holy the evening of Friday, in commemoration of the Sabbath. There is even an entire district, that of Reheibat, which bears the name of "The Sabbatical."

The Jews who come to Nefussa are warmly received by the Berbers, who would like to see their return. As a matter of fact, the Jews of Jerba have always kept up some sort of connection with the Nefussa. At Jado we were able to get together a *minian* (ten persons to form a quorum for prayer). After

electing Judah as *Gabbai*, they asked me to intervene with the Turkish authorities, that they might be given the old synagogue as well as the whole Hara with the abandoned cemetery.

The Turks look with approval on this return of the Jews. They even make efforts to retain them, particularly since the French have just constructed a city, Ben-gardin, on the very frontier of Tunis, where the Jews coming from Iffren and Jerba receive free plots of land to build on.

The rivalry between these two administrations is a striking proof of the economic value of the Jew even in the countries where, isolated from civilization and from the rest of his brothers, he has suffered for centuries slavery and oppression.

CHAPTER VIII

JEBEL NEFUSSA (Continued)

Wherever I went I found memorials and traditions of the hero Arun ben Arun. At Reheibat, tradition says, was found the proud inscription: "I, Arun ben Arun, who delivered his people in war."

In Jado they actually gave me the name of the owner of an oil press where the famous stone was to be found—Nuzarat Alajir. Raphael told me he had seen the stone—nay, had even read it. He seemed to have forgotten the fact that he could not read.

Jewish merchants have told me of other inscriptions to be found in the region of El Haraba. At Serus, which is further west, there is still a great, deserted city with the remains of a synagogue. A rabbi, in whose word confidence may be placed, told me that he actually possessed at one time a number of stones bearing the names of Simon Hori and of Moses Hori. The name Serus occurs to-day in Tripoli, even as that of Hori has been perpetuated at Jerba and that of Rehaibi at Tunis.

Our little caravan, of which Judah had now become a member, set out across rough but fertile country, watered by innumerable springs and rivers. We arrived at a place Huwaira, that is to say, the little Hara, or the little Jewish City; there was, no doubt,

a large Hara to be found somewhere in the neighborhood. We passed a mosque, where I found stones with the design of an anchor on them, dating from the Roman epoch. It is an axiom in Africa that wherever there are memorials of the Roman occupation the remains of Jewish colonies will most certainly be found. We came at last to Reheibat. The houses of this village, which is situated in the center of a fertile plain, are surmounted by cones. We proceeded to the house of the Sheik Manzur, and soon became the center of curiosity in the village. We received a visit from the Sheik Acan ben Ahmed, ninety-two years of age.

Reheibat is in the center of the Arab country, the inhabitants of which are not altogether friendly to the Jews. But even here Jewish tradition has been perpetuated. Reheibat, which probably means the "Great Hara," is still known as Reheibat-es-Sabt, Reheibat of the Sabbath, because, up to comparatively recent times, the Berbers of this city still continued to observe the Sabbath.

The Sheik told me that the whole of this district, known as El Chroba, was once peopled by Jews; that the Jews, moreover, were the masters of the whole Jebel before the coming of Nefussa. The Arabs who took possession of the district set about exterminating the Berber population, and probably the Jewish as well. The process of extermination went on down to our own days. It is scarcely forty years since the Turks exiled to Fezzan the turbulent tribe of the Hawara Berbers, who lived a half-nomadic life in these parts.

In the district of El Chroba, I was shown four Jewish cemeteries which have been ploughed up by the Arabs. The latter, who are strangers in the country as compared with the Berbers, and who despise everything which is not orthodox Mussulman, do not hesitate to profane cemeteries. This explains why the Jewish sanctuaries are always honored by the Berbers, while they disappear under Arab occupation.

To convince myself that the Arabs were not mistaken in determining the location of the Jewish cemeteries, I actually paid a visit to these places. In the midst of these cultivated fields I found fragments of tombstones, on one of which I was able to read the name Isaac. A Jew of Jerba, who has been living in Reheibat for twenty years and who buys up corn to resell on the coast, presented me with an unbroken tombstone which he found in a cemetery, and which is more than five hundred years old. He told me he had buried two similar stones in the cemetery.

Judging from the size of the one cemetery which I explored, and of the three others surrounding it, Reheibat the Sabbatical must at one time have been a "City and Mother" in Israel. I discovered even traces of Christianity at Reheibat—a Kasr-en-Nuzari, or Christian fort, and a stone with a cross inscribed on it. However, the hope which I still cherished of finding the famous stone of Arun ben Arun was doomed to disappointment.

My impatience as a historian, as well as my curiosity as a traveller, became all the keener as I seemed to draw nearer to a solution of this absorbing problem.

The Arabs were none too eager to serve as my guides, and it was only after the most earnest entreaties that we were able to proceed, accompanied by the Sheik of the village, to the oil press where the stone was said to be found.

The oil press, which is situated underground at the end of the village and just opposite the ancient Jewish cemetery, belonged to an Arab, who refused obstinately to open the door for us. The guard did not scruple to break the door in. We found ourselves in a cave which looked like the synagogue of Iffren rather than like a simple press. The columns, which were covered with black plaster, bore witness to a more solid and more finished style of architecture than that prevalent among the Arabs of to-day. The building faced north, like all the synagogues of Africa, and, indeed, both Rabbi Mordecai and myself were instantaneously struck with the idea that this was an ancient synagogue turned into an oil press after the disappearance of the Jews.

I was shown the column on one of the stones of which the famous inscription concerning Arun ben Arun was said to be found. Raphael himself had read it; the Sheik knew of it; Abdallah had seen it scarcely five years before. But what a bitter disappointment! The owner of the place had recently covered the column with a coating of black plaster, and every trace of an inscription was gone. I made no attempt to conceal my chagrin.

"Why, in Heaven's name, did you efface the inscription? Here it has been for centuries untouched.

Your ancestors did not dare to lay hands on it, and you—you come and destroy it!"—

"I did it because every passing Jew came and worried me to show him the inscription; and they kept coming in larger and larger numbers. I wanted to put an end to this nuisance once for all."

There was nothing to be done. Either the man was telling the truth, or else he had been instructed by the Turks to cover up the stone. I had occasion later to observe that the Turkish authorities did not want me to see too many antiquities.

The old Turk tried to console me with a very ingenious Arab pun. According to him the inscription did not read, "I, Arun ben Arun, who delivered my people in war," but, "I, Arun ben Arun, who bought back the mill with my wealth." Everybody laughed, and I had to accept this disappointment with a good grace.

Cheated out of my hope of finding the stone, I resumed my journey, and travelled back by another route, through the country of Tamesda.

In the village of Zemmara I met with two Jewish merchants, who greeted me with joy. They hastened to set before me *lagbi*, the white, sweetened liquor which is drawn from the trunks of palm trees and fermented—this to the joy of Judah, who is more than fond of intoxicating drinks.

We left Fossato, and took the road to the southwest. For several hours we marched across the Jebel Nefussa; then rain fell, cool and refreshing after the heat of the September sun. We descended along the northern

steppes, and there, near some wells, pitched our camp for the night.

The next morning we met with Asuaia Bedouins, who took us for some kind of Effendis or officials, and, after seeing us take notes in our notebooks, evidently decided that we were appraisers of taxes. An old Sheik accepted my invitation to a cup of tea, and, as we were drinking, suddenly burst out as follows:

"Why do you come to impose taxes on us? You know that we are the Asuaia, through whom the prophet dispenses miracles and blessings. And after you have imposed taxes on us, why do you not see to it that we are properly safeguarded? Why are we always a prey to the brigands of the desert?" The poor fellow was absolutely in the right, but, not being a Turk, I could do nothing for him.

At six o'clock in the morning we entered the desert which separates Fossato from the oases of the coast. We marched for sixteen hours through desert country without setting eyes on either man or beast. The sun burned so fiercely that the water in our leathern bottles became almost boiling hot.

Toward seven o'clock in the evening the wind which had sprung up brought to our nostrils the odor of stale water. We knew that we could not be far from wells, and would not have to pass the night in the open desert. It took us three hours to reach those wells; we found there an Arab duar (nomad encampment), and camped there ourselves for the night.

The next morning we set out across a sandy, brush-covered country. As we drew nearer the coast I was able to discover the traces of two ancient Jewish communities. These are known even to this day among the Arabs as Tel-el-Yehudia. They are situated in the two oases of Dachman and Zorman, the latter of which is mentioned in the Elegy of Ibn Ezra as having suffered in the twelfth century at the hands of the fanatic Almohades.

Finally we arrived at Zavia, a few hours distant from Tripoli.

CHAPTER IX

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF THE JEBEL

My researches in the Jebel brought to light the following interesting facts:

In a valley situated in the heart of the Iffren there is the site of an ancient synagogue, *Zlat-es-Sqaq* (Synagogue of the Roads), the origin of which is said to go back to the time of the destruction of the Temple.

A deserted village which bears the name of Cohen testifies to the existence of a clan of Aaronides, who at one time occupied a district apart, as is still the case with the Aaronides of Jerba.

A curious prayer for the souls of departed sages is recited on the Day of Atonement. Among others there are mentioned the "Scholars of the Mishnah", Rabbi (Judah ha-Nasi), Rab Ashi, R. Isaac Alfasi, Maimonides and his father, the martyr Aaron (?), the judge Jacob Hamelamed, Rabbi Menahem ben Joseph, and lastly, Rashi.

One also finds a number of usages contrary to talmudic tradition concerning the ritual purity of women, the prohibition against eating the hind quarters of slaughtered animals, etc.

Evidence is found of the presence of rabbis in the Jebel Nefussa in the period of the revival of talmudic studies in Africa. A rabbi named Hebron, from

Reheibat, is mentioned in an inscription on a tombstone of the fourteenth century. The most ancient of the surviving synagogues of Iffren have no dated inscriptions, but on a column there has been discovered a recent inscription dating from 5472 (1712). Jewish development in the Sahara was at a standstill under the rule of the Karamanli, till at last the Turkish occupation brought relief to the natives of the Jebel. The insurrection (about 1840) was headed by a Berber chief, Ghoma, who is the legendary hero of Jebel independence. The movement did not end till 1855. The following is an excerpt from a former study of mine on the relation of the Jews to this insurrection:

Ghoma was the soul of the resistance which the mountaineers of the desert offered to the rule of the Turks. From all accounts the personality of Ghoma recalls that of Abd-el-Kader, the hero of Algerian resistance. For the Jews his rise to power was a blessing. He decreed that no attack on the Jews or their property should go unpunished. He even forbade the Berbers to force the Jews to wear a black turban to distinguish them from the faithful. To the representations of the Berber chiefs, Ghoma replied as follows:

"What! Even the Turkish government, tyrannical as it was, permitted the Jews to dress as they pleased, and you—you have no sooner gained your liberty than you seek to persecute others."

What was more, Ghoma loved to surround himself with Jews. Thus, Attia, the head of the communities

of the Iffren, was appointed physician to the Berber troops; Khalifa Ammar was appointed his steward. The Jewish smiths he made his armorers.

Meanwhile the Jews, though they gave every proof of their fidelity to the Sheik, did not seem to believe that his reign would last very long; as a precaution they continued secretly to send the *askeria* (military head-tax) to the central government. Later events showed that this move had been well calculated.

In 1855 the Turkish Ahmed Pasha captured the chiefs of the insurrection and had them beheaded. The Turkish soldiers were disappointed to find no booty in the country, which had been laid waste by a long famine. Judging that the Jews would always find a safe place to hide their goods, the Turkish officers had recourse to the following ruse: they issued a proclamation to the effect that all those Jews who wished to have their lives and possessions spared were to gather together in a given spot, bringing all their possessions with them. They would then only have to hoist the Turkish flag to obtain the protection of the Sultan.

All the Jews obeyed the injunction. Bringing their goods with them, they encamped at Dissir, near the house of Khalifa Ammar, the Jewish steward of Ghoma. Here the Turkish soldiers surprised them: they pillaged the goods, and even stripped the men of the clothes they wore; after which a general amnesty for the Jews was proclaimed. As chance would have it, a secret message from Ghoma was found in the mantle of Khalifa Ammar. The steward

of Ghoma was accused of keeping up relations with the rebel chieftain, and was condemned to death.

This sentence had a profound effect on the coreligionists of the condemned man. Nissim Fallis, the intendant of the Turkish troops, himself a native of Tripoli, intervened energetically on behalf of the victim. The Turkish general yielded to the entreaties of the Jews, not without adding ironically:

"Was it not we who liberated the Jews from serfdom? And now, to show how grateful they are, they make compacts with our enemies."

❄ ❄ ❄

The Jews of the Jebel have a Hebrew dialect of their own, which is slowly disappearing. This is the "Lashon Hakodesh" of the Jebel. I have spoken of this elsewhere, but here I will indicate some of the peculiarities of this curious language:

1) Most of the words in the vocabulary are Hebrew, with only a change in the pronunciation. The Hebraic word persists even when it is common to Hebrew and Arabic, but it has been influenced by Arab vocalization. For example, nourishment מַאֲכָל is pronounced *makul;* dog, כֶּלֶב, *kalb;* with me, עִמְּדִי, *amusa*, and so on.

2) Words of Berber and Arab origin are very numerous.

3) The following is a list of words which are Hebrew in origin, but which are used in a figurative or indirect sense:

תֵּבוּת catafalque, instead of ארון or מטה

דַּבַּר to say, instead of אמר

מְקוֹמָה house, instead of בית or דירה

חֲבָלָה pregnant woman, instead of הרה

מָשְׁכָּחָה prostitute, instead of זונה

שׁוֹמִירָה dog, instead of כלב

מְזוֹנָא bread, instead of לחם

מלבושָׁא garment, instead of בגד

הַרְגִּ to take prisoner, instead of שבה

Aramaic words are often used, like תַּרְצָאָה, appeasement; זבן, to sell; מצעיא, seat.

Many words are figurative: אותו האיש, Mohammed; כהן, bribery; שטר, treachery; נשמה, mirror; משכחה, prostitute.

Several words are of Greek origin: קופאלא = *κεφαλή*, head; כַּלַי *καλά*, good, beautiful; *μάχαιρα*, knife. To this list, I believe, should be added the term *Hara*, sometimes *Hora* (*χώρα*), walled city, which, used in this sense, is often to be met with in Atlas and in Malta.[34]

The declensions offer a number of curious points: The word חֵץ, arrow, is used in the Arabic plural חאץ; יד, a hand, which forms יָדַיִם in the dual, is declined יָדַיְמִי my hands, יָדַיְמִיךְ thy hands, ידיימו his hands,

[34] A distinction should be made between "hara" and the Arabic "harit."

ידיימנא our hands, ידיימכום your hands, ידיימהום their hands, etc.

The pronoun mine is שלויא instead of שלי; שלוה instead of שלו, etc.

The forms of the verb are more irregular; for example, the verb to come is הקאתא; in the third person singular it is תקאתיא, and for the feminine, התקאתאת, etc. The first person of the imperfect is always preceded by a נ: נ'אעשה instead of אעשה; נ'אשתיה instead of אשתה.

The elements of this language may be met with in Algeria and in Morocco,—but here we find just a few scattered and isolated words which Jews use among themselves in order that outsiders should not understand.

HEBRAIC INSCRIPTIONS IN THE JEBEL NEFUSSA

I have made a collection of inscriptions on tombstones found in the Jebel Nefussa. One stone was discovered at Jado, whence it was carried to Tripoli. It dates from the year 1159.[35]

No. 1.

1 He has been gathered to Paradise leaving Life	1 נאסף לגן עדן וחיים
2 To all Israel Rabbi	2 לכל ישראל שבק רבי

[35] See, for the commentary, my study: "Un Voyage d'Etudes Juives en Afrique," Recueil des savants de l'Académie, Paris, 1900.

3 Tamam, may he rest in Eden, son of Rabbi Joseph, may he rest in Eden	3 תמאם נ'ע ביר יוסף נ'ע
4 . . . the day of Monday, the second	4 פ'פ'א' ביום שני לשנים
5 And twentieth (22nd) day of the month Shebat	5 ועשרים יום לירח שבט
6 The year four thousand	6 שנת ארבעת אלפים
7 And nine hundred and nine-	7 ותשע מאות ותשע
8 Teen (19) of the Creation	8 עשרה שנה לבריאת
9 Of the world;[36] may his dwelling be under	9 העולם מלונו יהיה תחת
10 "The Tree of Life" and with the seven	10 עץ החיים ועם שבע
11 Categories of the just	11 כתות של צדיקים
12 May be his part and his lot	12 יהיה חלקו וגורלו
13 Amen and Amen.	13 אמן ואמן

No. 2.

Another stone, which I found at El Meanin, and which is of the same origin as the first (dates from 1245), bears the following inscription:

1 He has been gathered to Paradise	1 נאסף לגן עדן
2 To all Israel leaving life	2 לכל ישראל שבק חיים

[36] 1159.

3 The master rabbi Moshe . . . (whom the Spirit of God shelter) in the month (of Shebat)	3 כ'ר משה רי'ת בחדש [שבט]
4 Year five thousand and five	4 שנת חמש אלפים [וחמש]
5 Of the creation of the world	5 שנים לבריאת עולם
6 May the Most High give him his part	6 המקום ישים חלקו
7 And his lot in Paradise with	7 וגורלו בגן עדן עם
8 The seven categories of the just	8 שבע כתות של צדיק
9 Moses and Aaron	9 ים משה ואהרן עם
10 . . . the dwellers among the plants . . .	10 ין ישבי נטעים....
11 And may the verse come to pass concerning him	11 [ויקו]יים עליו מקרא
12 (as it is written)—Thy dead will be brought to life	12 [שכתוב] יחיו מתיך [נבל]ר
13 My body (will arise, Amen).	13 [תי יקומון אמן]

No. 3.

Of the two stones I found at Jado, I have kept only one, on which there was the following inscription:

1 Was gathered to Paradise leaving life to all Israel	1 נאסף [לגן עדן ל]כל ישראל חיים שבק
2 the master rabbi	2 כ"ר.....
3	
4 The year four (thousand ...) and ninety of the creation of the world	4 ארבעת [אלפים ו]...תשעים לבריאת עולם
5 May the Most High give him his lot with those who sleep in Hebron and with	5 המקום ישים [גורלו עם ישני חברון ועם]
6 Moses and Aaron (and with the seven)	6 משה ואהרן [ועם שבע]
7 Categories of the just be	7 כתות של צדיקים יהיה
8 his part...and with	8 חלקו...ועם
9 (the dwellers) amongst the plants, and may his death serve him	9 [וישבי] נטעים מיתתו תהי
10 As atonement for all his sins and may he sit	10 כפרה על כל עונותיו וישב
11 At (the feet) of the chosen House	11 [רגלי] בית הבחירה
12 (and rise with the j)ust and the prophets	12 [ויקום עם הצדי]קים ועם הנביאים
13 In the life of the world to come. Amen and Amen.	13 בחיי עולם הבא אמן ואמן.

[1] This inscription dates from about 4990 (1230) at the latest. In the text there are a number of curious formulas which are not in use anywhere else.

No. 4.

My excavations in the oldest part of the cemetery at Jado furnished me with a Jewish stone on which, side by side with an inscription in Cufic Arabic, the name is written in Hebrew. This stone probably dates from a very early period—perhaps from the eighth century.

In Arabic: האדא אלקבר חס נא [חסנא]
"This is the tomb of Hassana."
The name is also given in archaic Hebrew writing.

No. 5.

REHEIBAT-ES-SABT

In the four ancient Jewish cemeteries which have been ploughed up by the Arabs I found only fragments of stones with Hebrew inscriptions. Only one stone had been preserved intact. The inscription follows:

1 How precious is thy Mercy, O God.....
1 מה יקר חסדך אל [הים].....
2 Gathered to Paradise the Master rabbi Hebron
2 נאסף לגן עדן הרב רבי חברון נ'ע
3 Son of the master Mar-juk...
3 בי'ר כבוד ר' מרזוק ובתויל (?)
4 In the month of Sivan in the year five thousand one hundred
4 בחודש סיון שנת חמשת אלפים ומאת
5 and fifty two (of the Creation) leaving life to all Israel
5 ושנים וחמשים שנים ליצירה חיים לכל ישראל

6 May the most Merciful One give him his share with Moses and Aaron and with

6 שבק הרחמן ישים חלקו עם משה ואהרן ועם

7 Those who sleep in Hebron and with the seven categories of the

7 ישיני חברון ועם שבע כתות של

8 Just in Paradise... may his death be an atonement for all

8 צדיקים בגן עדן תהי מיתתו כפרה על כל

9 His sins, and may it be the will of

9 עונותיו אמן וכן יהי ראצון מן קדם

10 The Lord of Heaven.

10 מאריה שמיא.

The date 5152 (1392 C.E.) is the latest to be met with in the texts of the Jebel. This year marks a new epoch in the history of the Jews of Africa, that of the arrival of the Spanish rabbis who established the rabbinic law of Europe in Africa. The originality of the texts, formulas and usages gave way from this time onward to the manner of life and of writing of the Spanish rabbis.

CHAPTER X

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

Of a pure southern type, these Tripolitan Jews are superior in general physique to their Mussulman neighbors. They are much whiter than the Mussulmans, and the women are particularly beautiful. They are certainly the descendants of Jews who came to this country from Palestine, but there is undoubtedly in them a strain of Berber and Arab blood. Of such a type the Jews of Palestine must have been at the time of their independence.

The first names of Tripolitan Jews are exceedingly strange; men's names are: Hammus (which means five, a lucky number), Mamus, Hoito, Tato (a fish), Hoini, Shluma, Hai (Haim), Shmoni, Mani (from Rachmani, merciful), Hasso (Pineas), Lalo, Oihu (Elijah), Sumani (Nissim), Bahuma (Abraham), Dido (David), Sfani (Joseph). Names of women: Zatuba, Buba (Mazzal tob מזל טוב), Lahum, Masso, Missa, Hmessa (five), Nina (Anna), Mruma, Rima (Miriam), Yzza, etc.

They seldom have family names, but they bear the names of clans and of tribes, and such tribes as the Hassans, the Attia, the Guetta, the Arbib, etc., count their members by hundreds. This confirms the story that at one time the country was laid waste and the towns destroyed, and the Jews grouped themselves

into semi-nomadic tribes, such as are found in Tunis.

There are no Spanish names; a few Italian words have reached this region from the coast. Still, the dialect of the Jews, with its Berber and Hebrew, is purer than the dialect of the Mussulman citizen. The pronunciation of the Jews of Tripoli differs somewhat from that of the Jews of Tunis; thus they pronounce ח *ch*, ו *u; o* and *u* are interchangeable.

The religious usages of the Sephardic ritual have been carried into the country by the *Shaliah* from Palestine, who, in Africa, lays down the law on all matters of religion. On the other hand, the Jews of Tripoli have retained many customs and traditions which are peculiar to the Jews of African origin. Even at Tripoli, which has always been in touch with Italian Judaism, we find the strangest customs.

Thanks to the kindness of Rabbi Mordecai Cohen and M. M. Sutton, I was able to add the following details to those which my own researches had revealed.

In the old synagogue of Tripoli and in several other communities, the prayer "Shemoneh Esreh" is said audibly on Wednesdays. In one synagogue in Tripoli the haftarah for the Sabbath preceding the ninth of Ab is Isaiah 22 instead of Isaiah 1. The haftarah of Shemot is also different.

The evening before the first day of Nisan is called the night of *Bessissa* (from the Arabic *bass*, Hebrew בסס, to steep), which is a solemn festival. All work is forbidden. All the members of the family must meet then under the same roof, and the absence of one of them is said to cause a death during the coming

year. On this occasion a dish is served which is made of wheat and barley mixed with a little cumin and coriander, and soaked in oil. The following prayer is said: "O Thou that openest without a key, who givest without humiliating, give unto us and unto ours that which is necessary to us." This ceremony may be a survival of a harvest festival among a people which to this day has remained partly agricultural.

The Jewish girls of Tripoli, from the age of thirteen onwards, cover their faces, in Mussulman fashion, with a *barakan*, a sort of *haik* or shawl which envelops them completely. This usage which is not followed in the interior, is not incumbent upon married women, who may be seen in the street unveiled. There are a few fanatical families in which the daughters are not permitted to step outside the house until the day of their marriage.

However, it is a custom, on the last day of Passover, for the girls to go out upon the roofs or to stand in front of their doors, with their faces uncovered. There they await the coming of their future husbands, and deck themselves out in jewels and in flaunting colors to make themselves pleasing in the eyes of the young men. When a young man's choice falls on a maiden, he may make known his desire to the parents of the chosen one by sending them a basketful of lettuce and bouquets of flowers. The acceptance of these presents is a tacit consent to the match. A reception is then given for the parents, the friends and the neighbors. The betrothed girl is seated on the

ground, her face covered, and the fiancé, and after him all the guests, smite her on the head with flowers.

In the Jebel this wooing ceremony is replaced by the gathering of young girls near the fountain, where they await the coming of the young men. It is indeed a wonderful thing to see, this survival of the Patriarchal customs of our people. It brings to memory the great festivals whereof the Talmud speaks, when "the daughters of the Israelites were wont to go forth into the fields to meet the young men, whom they challenged with these words: 'Young man, lift up thine eyes and choose me.'"

On the first day of Passover the Jews of Tripoli go out into the fields. This custom, which is to be met with as far as Tunis, recalls the ancient days when, according to Ibn Ezra, the "heretics" of Wargla, that is to say, of the Algerian Sahara, went into the fields for the whole day, in commemoration of the exodus from Egypt.

The mazzot are made daily during the Passover week; they are thick and very bad, like those made by the Karaites.

On the first day of the Omer a lump of salt is given out in the synagogue to each worshipper, who must keep it intact during the forty-nine days of the *Sefirah*. Whenever the Omer is counted, the piece of salt is taken out, is brought close to the eyes and looked at fixedly, whilst the following prayer is said: "May God restore the Temple speedily, in our days." They believe that this piece of salt protects them against the evil eye, and has the power of calming a

tempest when thrown into the sea. M. Sutton believes that this custom may be traced back to Leviticus, where salt is prescribed in connection with the sacrifices.

The Jews of Tripoli often make the following oath: "By the father, by the lamp, I am telling the truth." M. Sutton has compiled a list of no less than thirty-four such oaths; the following are a few examples: *Hai Adonai;* by el Ghriba (synagogue of Jerba); by the seven *sefarim* and the seven heavens; by the bread and the salt; by the Name and the sacrifice; by Rab Azulai[36a]; by the twelve roes; and finally, by the candelabrum. This last, I believe, has reference to the seven-branched candlestick of the Temple. Indeed, from the earliest antiquity, the seven-branched candlestick has been the emblem of the Jews of Africa. Traces of it may be found among the ruins of Carthage and Algeria, as well as on the oldest tombstones. In the towns of the interior, the customs of ancient times have been preserved even more perfectly.

Mention is found in Maimonides of the rigid laws relating to menstruation, which distinguish the Jews from the Mussulmans. These laws hold good even today in the Jebel. I was able to ascertain that such is the case with at least two other commands which are mentioned in the writings of the great philosopher.

A curious fact which is characteristic of the Jews of Tripoli is the complete absence of Cohanim and

[36a] H. D. Azulai, author of the biographical work שם הגדולים.

Leviim in the interior and even in Tripoli. The few families of Cohanim to be found in Tripoli are of foreign birth.

According to a superstition current in the Jebel, which is contrary to all Jewish tradition and which has been combatted in vain, Jews are forbidden to receive any stranger in their house during the first days of Pesah and the two days of Rosh Hashanah —not even a *Shaliah* from Jerusalem. This is all the stranger in as much as the Jews of the interior practise unbounded hospitality. The writer himself has everywhere been received with the utmost kindness. How often, passing by the mansions of the wealthy Jews of Tunis and Algeria, has he remembered with gratitude the peaceful huts and caverns of our far away brothers, among whom there still reigns the spirit of the "Mal'ah ha-Shalom!"

The ceremony of *Kapparot* is observed twice a year in the interior: on the eve of Rosh Hashanah and on the eve of Yom Kippur. The bones of the *Kapparah* are buried.

The Feast of Weeks is marked by a custom which recalls the libation ceremonies of antiquity. Water is poured from leathern bottles on the heads of passers-by, and they believe that the more water they pour, the more prosperous will be the coming year. The Mussulmans take part enthusiastically in this ceremony.

When the day before the ninth of Ab is a Sabbath, the parents of a new-born son cook a dish called

simshuma, which is made of peas and barley and distributed among all the members of the community.

The customs relating to the dead are similar to those of Tunis, which are treated elsewhere in this volume. A few details may, however, be mentioned here.

When a dead body makes a motion as if to rise, it is said to be moved by an evil spirit, and must be struck violently to prevent it from rising again. Under the head of a corpse a sackful of sand is placed. If the death took place on a Sabbath, a knife and a piece of bread are placed on the breast of the body. If the deceased leave no male issue, they make the cover of his coffin out of the top of his table. The hair-band is always buried with a dead woman. If two members of the same family die in one year, they release a cock in the field before the coffin in order to ward off a third calamity. On returning from the cemetery, they drive a nail into the door of the house. Indeed, religion in Tripoli has a large admixture of superstition. Here, as elsewhere, misery is the mother of superstition.

It is difficult to determine the number of Jews in Tripoli, as in all other Mussulman countries, because of the peculiar system of taxation. The following are my own estimates:

Tripoli has a population of between nine hundred thousand and one million, of which about thirty thousand are Jews. The latter are divided up as follows:

Tripoli, 15,000; Zanzur, 300; Zavia, 800; Zura, 60; Jebel Gharian, 1,000; Jebel Iffren, 2,500; Tajura, 300; Msellata, 800; Homs, 500; Zlitin, 700; Mesrata, 1,000; Syrte, 50; Bengazi, 2,000-2,500; Derna, 300. In addition to these, there are a few families scattered here and there through the desert.

CHAPTER XI

SOME HISTORICAL ASPECTS

Northern Africa—outside of Egypt—known among the Arabs as the country of Maghreb, or of the West, and among modern geographers as Africa Minor, forms the southern boundary of the Mediterranean, which has been the controlling factor in its climate, its culture and its history. This part of Africa has always been the white man's holding in the dark continent, and is separated from the country of the negroes by the Great Desert, wherein rove those half-breed nomad populations which are generally grouped under the heading of the Hamitic races. From earliest times there lived in these parts of Africa numerous white races, more or less pure-blooded, who seem to be native to this part of the world. These are the Libyans of the Greeks and the Lub of the Bible—known today as the Berbers—a race strong in its resistance to the influence of outside ideas, but weak in its tendency—determined chiefly by the isolated character of the oases—to split up into hostile groups. It is this internecine strife among the Berbers which has permitted the dominant races of all periods to gain a foothold on the African coast and to extend their rule over the *Sahels* (plains) and *Tell* (plateaus) which separate the temperate north country from the desert regions. The Egyptians in their time certainly

dominated a part of Libya, the region of Barca and beyond. In the seventh century the Greeks founded Pentapolis or the five Greek cities of Cyrenaica, so named after the great city of Cyrene. The Phœnicians of Tyre and Sidon colonized the regions of the Syrtes—that is, the oases of the Tripoli of to-day—where they possessed Tripolis or the three cities of Oea (Tripoli), Leptis Magna and Sabrata, the centers of commerce with the interior of Libya, which stretched as far as the Sudan. To the northwest, extending as far as Carthage, is the region of the little Syrte. In the seventh century Carthage became the metropolis of the Phoenician colonies which cover the whole of "Tarshish" as far as the Atlantic. After the destruction of Carthage, the Romans turned this district, known as Byzantine Africa, into a separate province, which divides Libya from the two Mauretanias, the Caesarean Mauretania with Caesarea as the capital, and the Tingiatian Mauretania with Tingis (Tangiers) as the capital. These Mauretanian provinces correspond to Western Oran (the department of Oran) and to Northern Morocco, which stretches as far as Saffi on the Atlantic and Volubilis (near Mequinez) in the interior.

There are indications in the Bible, as well as in the works of ancient writers and on Phoenician inscriptions discovered from time to time, that numbers of Hebrew settlers, or slaves, followed the Phoenicians in their excursions across the Mediterranean. In the Prophets of the seventh century we find allusions to the diaspora in this region. The traffic in slaves,

which was carried on so extensively by the Greeks, served to attract Jewish colonies to the Hellenic world (cf. Joel, 4; Ezekiel, 26). The Tyrians, complains the Prophet Joel, sell the daughters of Judea to the Ionians, far from their native land. Isaiah 11,11 defines as follows the limits of the Diaspora: "The Lord will . . . recover the remnant of his people that shall remain from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush (Ethiopia) . . . and from the Islands of the sea." Elsewhere he mentions the colonies of Pul and of Lud, of Tarshish (Libya and the western Mediterranean), "and the distant Isles."

At this time the term "the language of Canaan" became synonymous with the "Language of Eber" (Isaiah 19,18); the Israelites became the "Canaanites" (merchants) even unto the Hesperides (Obadiah, 1, 20) so that Greeks could not distinguish between the Hebrews and the Phoenicians. This confusion was all the more natural as the Jews of that time were not pure monotheists, as is proven by the religious eclecticism of the colony which went down with Jeremiah to Egypt.

However this may be, it is certain that about the year 320 Ptolemy Soter established numbers of Jewish military colonies in Egypt and in Libya, in the fortresses which were intended to protect the country against Greek invasions. This is the first known date in the history of the Jews in Libya. There have always been Jewish colonies outside of Egypt. There

were some in Greek Libya, and in the fifth century there was one on the Island of Elephantis.

From the time of the Maccabeans, these colonies kept in touch with Jerusalem; numerous settlers flocked to them; writers sprang up among them, such as Jason of Cyrene. The first Roman attempt to take possession of Pentapolis was met by the resistance of the Jewish military colonies. Strabo of Cappadocia, a contemporary of these events, records a rebellion of the Jews of Cyrenaica, which Lucullus was sent to suppress. In this connection he writes: "In Cyrene there were citizens, laborers, strangers (metics) and Jews. For the latter may be found in every city, and it would be difficult to find a place which has not received them and of which they have not become the masters."[36b]

Thus, the history of the time tells us that, on the eve of the Roman invasion, there existed, between Elephantis and Ethiopia, autonomous Jewish colonies, which were military, agricultural and industrial in character, with a republican form of government, and which exercised a civilizing religious influence on the natives of the country. This view was held also by the geographer Elisée Reclus.[37]

And without being certain of it, we may conclude

[36b] Josephus, Jew. Antiq., XII, 16; XV, 7; Jew. Wars, II, 35; Against Apion, II, 4; Philo, Legat. ad Caium, § 30. For a complete bibliography, see Slouschz, Judéo-Hellènes et Judéo-Berbères, pp. 38–39.

[37] L'Homme et la Terre, II, 239.

that this colonization had penetrated the African continent to a considerable depth before the coming of the Romans. What took place in other Mediterranean countries we may judge, by analogy, to have taken place in Libya and in Ethiopia. Knowing as we do of the colonization of the Thebaid by 8,000 Samaritans sent by Alexander, and learning from the Papyrus of Assuan of the Jewish colony in Ethiopia, we can no longer ignore the traditions attaching to the Judaism of pre-talmudic times—traditions which cover the whole of northern Africa. And these traditions speak now of David and Joab, now of Joshua and Solomon, and even of Esdras, the last in connection with clans of Aaronides and with Cohens.

The Romans, who had sufficient political sagacity to turn to their own advantage the individual characteristics of subject peoples, appreciated at its full worth the influence exercised by the Jews in this part of the world. From the year 138-9 B.C. the Roman Senate declared itself the ally of the Jewish people, and the protector of their rights; in this declaration there is special mention of the Jews of Cyrenaica. If the Jews of Cyrenaica, faithful to the Ptolemies, opposed the Roman occupation in the year 87, as they opposed, for similar reasons, the occupation of Onion (Jewish district of the temple of Onias in Egypt) by Julius Caesar, the Romans soon forgave them. The Jews of Cyrenaica were even accorded special privileges by Julius Caesar, who forbade the Greeks to prevent the Jews from sending dues to the

Temple at Jerusalem. Augustus had these privileges confirmed through the Senate of Cyrene.[38]

The Greek inscription which was found at Bengazi (Berenice), dating from the year 16 B.C., bears witness to the Hellenic character of the Jewish communities of Cyrene.

Moreover, from earliest times, the Jews of Cyrenaica have figured in the written records of the country. A seal has been found in Cyrenaica bearing an inscription in ancient Hebrew.[39]

From the time of Jesus onwards, we find Jews, freed-men of Libya, both in Libya and in Jerusalem[40]; there were even Libyan proselytes amongst them, for it is on record that the tribunal of Jerusalem sought to identify the latter with the Egyptians, in order to prevent them from intermarrying with Jews.

However this may be, it is certain that shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, Jews and Jewish proselytes formed a large part, if not the majority, of the population of Libya.

The terrible struggles of the Jews with the Romans (66-70 and 115-133) did not fail to affect the African Jewish colonies. Encouraged by the Romans, the jealous Greeks took advantage of the political situation, and threw themselves on the Jewish communities in Alexandria and elsewhere.

[38] Josephus, Jew. Antiq., XII, 3; XIV, 10, 24; XX, 8; XXI, 6. Jew. Wars, II, 13, 18, 20.

[39] On it may be read in 'Ibrit characters: "Obadiah ben Yashub." See Jahrbuch für die Geschichte des Judenthums, II, 163.

[40] Mark, XV, 21; Luke, XXI, 11 and 16; Acts, II, 5; VI, 9, etc.

Amongst the combatants at Jerusalem, Flavius Josephus mentions the Cyrenians.[41] In the year 70, the Zealots who escaped from the destruction sought to stir up the Jews of Egypt as far as the Thebaid.[42] Their activities occasioned the closing of the Temple of Onias at Heliopolis. At Cyrene, Jonathan the Zealot[43] rallied some 2,000 Jews to his banner and led them into the desert, no doubt to join with the military Jews. He was denounced and taken prisoner by the Prefect Catullus, who profited by the occasion to put to death 3,000 notable Jews of Cyrene, and to seize their possessions. We see, then, that Jewish Libya was capable of revolting.

The hatred between the Jews and the Greeks strengthened the desire for revenge. For a whole generation this spirit worked in silence amongst the Jewish communities. Then came the outburst of the year 115. It is said by writers that a wave of madness and bravery passed through the whole of the Jewish world, inspiring them to return from the most distant countries to the rescue of the Jews of Judea and of Africa. But it was in the countries of Greek civilization that the storm broke with the greatest fury—and it was against the Greeks that it was directed. It began in the year 111—in Mesopotamia, whence the Jews expelled the Romans, intending to regain Palestine—and by the year 114 it had reached Alexandria. The

[41] Jewish Wars, 6.
[42] Ibid, VI, 36.
[43] Ibid, VII; Vita, 76.

island of Cyprus revolted in its turn, and two hundred thousand Greeks were massacred.

But the Jewish military colonies were best able to hold out as long as the insurrection lasted.[44] Headed by a certain Andreas, or Lucus, and no doubt seconded in their efforts by the Judaizing Berbers, the Jews threw themselves upon the Greeks, and massacred 220,000 (?) of them, with the most unspeakable cruelties (?). The Roman general having failed to suppress the insurrection, Hadrian sent against the rebels the Moorish Prince, Marcius Turbo, who was no doubt thoroughly conversant with the country. He marched against the rebels with large forces composed of infantry, cavalry, and even a naval division. The war lasted three years, and the issue was contested with the utmost fury. The Roman troops succeeded at last, surrounded the rebels and cut them to pieces. Women and children were not spared. In order to cut off the retreat of the defeated troops, and to prevent the return of such as had succeeded in escaping, the Romans devastated the country, turning it into a desert. The fugitives, unable to return, distributed themselves among the Berbers and Ethiopians.

This disappearance of a whole Jewish world, in which were included the remainders of the military colonies, and the descendants of the Aaronides of Onion and of Elephantis—with perhaps some others of Libya—is an event which explains a good deal in

[44] See Orosius, VI, 2.

the later history of the Jews of Africa. The Jewish settlements beyond Pentapolis were not destroyed.

At the time of the destruction of Jerusalem the Romans undoubtedly sent Jewish settlers into Libya. We have already seen that the Jews of the Tripolitan Jebel claim that they came originally from Jerusalem, and that they are supported in this by certain writings of the Middle Ages. According to local tradition, they came to Africa as the prisoners of the Roman general, Phanagorus, King of the Arabs. In any case, it is certain that in Roman times there were Jewish colonies in Libya, like the one near Borion (near Cyrenaica), where there was a magnificent synagogue which was said to date from the time of Solomon. According to Procopius, Belisarius forced these Jews to be converted, but this does not mean to say that they may not have returned to Jerusalem when the Berbers revolted, soon after. A little further on in the Syrte, near Iscina, says M. Monceaux, there was once a colony known as Vicus Judaeorum Augusti. This scholar writes as follows:

"There was an important group of Jewish settlers or slaves, who were probably established on this coast immediately after a war. The district is still known as Medinat-el-Sultan, which means Vicus Augusti."

There is, in this same region, a district which has always been known as Yehudia (the Jewish city). In this connection it is interesting to note that whenever the Arab historians write of the period of the Arab invasion, they always mention that there were then in Africa Berber tribes which professed Judaism.

Among other writers, Ibn Khaldun gives the exact geographical distribution and the characteristics of these tribes as follows:

"In Ifriqia (Tunis) there were the Nefussa, an older branch of the Luata (the Libyans of ancient times), who professed Judaism. In Aures (Algeria) there were the Jerua. In Oran, and particularly in the region of Tlemçen, there were the Mediuna. In Morocco, the Behlula, the Riata, the Fazaz, and the Fendelua."

Among these peoples Ibn Khaldun[45] devotes a special part to the Jerua: "This was a people composed of many tribes which continued to live in Ifriqia and Maghreb in a state of absolute independence. Long before the first appearance of Islam in Africa, the Jerua were distinguished for their power and for the numbers of their warriors. To the Christians of the cities they pretended to submit, but in order to remain the masters of the desert, they lent their armed support to the Christians whenever this was asked for."

To show the importance of the rôle which this mysterious people played, Ibn Khaldun goes on to say: "From the Jerua came the royal dynasties of all the Berber tribes of the branch of the Branes." (The Branes were those who occupied the center of the country, and whose traditions ascribed to them a Palestinian origin.)

In the history of the struggles of the Africans

[45] History of the Berbers, French translation by Slane, vol. II, 483, vol. III, 493.

against the Arab invaders, the Jerua played the leading rôle in the bitter resistance offered by the Berbers to the Asiatics. These struggles are glorified by the deeds of Cahena, the Jeanne d'Arc of African folklore, whose existence is an historical fact. The Arab author, moreover, gives us the list of eight of her ancestors, which takes us back to the period of the Vandal domination, in the fifth century.

We have, moreover, the testimony of the Arab authors Al Bekri, Rud el Cartas, etc., concerning the armed resistance which the Berber Jews in the mountain fastnesses of the Moroccan Atlas (at Fazaz, etc.), offered to Idris I., the conqueror of Morocco (VIIIth century).

The existence of distinct groups of Jews among the Berbers was duly noted by the Rabbis of the Middle Ages. Thus in a letter attributed to Maimonides,[46] mention is made of the peoples inhabiting Jerba and the Jebels of Libya as being "the hardiest people in the world, having the same beliefs and the same superstitions as their Mussulman neighbors." Among others, Abraham Ibn Ezra speaks of the heresies of the "Minim" (heretics) of the Oasis of Wargla (Exod. 12, 2, 2nd Comm.). Similar allusions may be found in Ibn Daud and even in Zacuto, in the Yuhasin.

In the same way, various *responsa* (*teshubot*) of the time of the Geonim show us that there were even communities known as having their own separate traditions.

[46] See אגרות הרמב"ם.

Records show that there were Karaite Jews in Morocco from the ninth to the sixteenth century. (Leo Africanus reports that he saw them in the Atlas mountains in the sixteenth century.)

All this leads us to believe that there was a distinct Jewish group, African in origin, as distinguished from those Jews who came later from Italy and Spain. These are the descendants of the ancient Jewish colonists of the classical period and of those Jews who came later with the Arabs from Egypt.

Between the tenth and the twelfth centuries, Judaism again prospered; but this prosperity was destined to come to an end with the persecution of the Almohades (1140-1160). An elegy written by Ibn Ezra, to which additions have been made by various African writers, gives us a picture of the prosperity of the Jews of Africa at that time, and depicts the terrible catastrophe, from which they never recovered. The Hebrew text follows; the translation has been split up, and the parts incorporated with the respective chapters in this book which deal with the cities mentioned in the Elegy:

ELEGY OF ABRAHAM IBN EZRA ON THE PERSECUTIONS OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.[47]

אהה ירד ,עלי ספרד, רע מן השמים
וספוד רב, עלי מערב, לזאת רפו ידים...
והוי אקרא. כמצרה. על קהלת סגלמאסה

[47] The text of the Poem is taken from Cahana's edition of the Poems of Abraham Ibn Ezra, Achiasaf, Warsaw, vol I, pp. 140–143 and p. 250.

ועיר גאונים ונבונים. מאורם חשך כסה.
ושח עמוד, והתלמוד, והבניה נהרסה,
והמשנה, לשנינה. ברגלים נרמסה.
ועיר מלוכה והנבוכה. מראכס המיוחסה.
עלי יקרים. מדקרים. עין אויב לא חסה
אהה, אפס, קהל פאס, יום נתנו למשסה.
ואי חסן, קהל תלמסן והדרתה נמסה.
וקול ארים, בתמרורים, עלי סבתא ומכנאסה
וסות אקרעה, עלי דרעה. אשר לפנים נתפשה.
וביום שבת, ובן עם בת שפכו דמם כמים.

The following lines were added by an African writer:

ולמה רבי אברם קצת מקומות שכחת
עיר לחאמא וגם קפצא וגירבא לא זכרת.
אשר כלו ברוב גלות ועונם דלנת.
עדת צורמאן הנבוכים וגם קהל מסלאתה
ושכחת את קהל הנבוכים מצראתה,
אשר עונם גדל מאד, ולשונם נשתה,
ונתנו עליהם מסים ועבודה קשתה.
והלך קצתם וברח ולא באו עד עתה,
וקצת גלו לגירבה העיר אשר שכחת.
מהם הלך לצורמאן ותעו ונשארו חיתה.
כל ימיהם מדכאים ,ועינם ונפשם כלתה
מקוים לעת הרוחה ומנוחה לא באתה,
יום יבוא בן ישי וגם את בן אפרים

Another addition:

ואתפלשה בעפר, על תנוס ועל סוסא,
וגם אכה על לחיי על אלמהדייא הרמוסה.
ונמס לבי בקרבי, לקאבס המיוחסה.
ופניתי לטראבלס בעודה נעמסה.

This persecution did not put an end to the existence of the Jewish converts of Africa; in Tunis, in Tripoli, and in the Atlas mountains they became Jews again very soon. In Morocco these converts remained non-Jews until 1288, when the Merinide Sultans recognized the Jewish faith.

It was not until after 1391 that there set in group emigration of Jews from Spain and from the Balearic Islands; in 1492 these emigrations became very large. Thus it comes that the Jews of Africa are of dual origin; some of them coming from Europe and some of them descended from a race relatively autochthonous. In the north of Morocco and often in the north of Algeria the Jews are of Spanish origin, whereas in Tunis and at various other points on the coast we find Jews of Italian origin. These Jews all speak a European dialect, and always trace their origin back to Italy or Spain; they differ in few respects from their coreligionists of Mediterranean Europe.

The Jews native to Africa may be subdivided as follows:

1. Judeo-Arabs, Jews in race and Arab in custom, who form the whole of the urban population in the main cities of Barbary in the interior. In this class may be included the Jews of central Morocco, of the Algerian and Tunisian cities, and the Jews of Tripoli. Several times during their history these Judeo-Arabs have received an admixture of Asiatic and European blood. Nevertheless, as is indicated by their type, their names, their manners, customs and traditions, the first nucleus was formed of Jews native to the

country. Even those communities which, at a given point in their history, received a sudden and large influx of European Jews—as was the case with Tunis and with Tlemçen—have managed to retain their African character, thanks to their re-enforcement by numbers of Judeo-Berbers from the interior.

Thus, at Tunis, the majority of these Jews bear the ethnic names of Berber tribes and cities of the interior. At Tripoli there is an even larger proportion of names of Berber or Saharan origin.

2. This division includes those groups of Jews which I shall designate as Judeo-Berbers: these latter may in turn be subdivided into the non-nomadic mountain groups of the Jebels of Tripoli and of the Atlas, the cave-dwellers, and the nomads. They possess all the characteristics of a native race which, though to-day reduced in numbers and importance, has left the traces of its former influence in the religion, the customs, the language and the geographical appellations of the country.

PART III

CARTHAGE AND TUNIS

CHAPTER I

FROM CARTHAGE TO TUNIS

Carthage to Tunis! magic names, which stand at the head of two of the most glorious chapters in the history of the great Semitic family!

Carthage!—*Kart Hadshat* (new city), the great city of Hannibal, which for centuries kept in check the might of Rome, and the fall of which preluded and perhaps determined the fall of the Hebraic sister-city—Jerusalem; Carthage! whose every vestige was destroyed by her Roman enemy—her civilization, her influence, her very monuments—to-day, thanks to French science, emerges again before the eyes of men, in all the phantasy of ancient decorations, with her hundreds of sarcophagi and statues and basements of her temples.

Nearly four thousand inscriptions in the ancient tongue of Canaan have been unearthed in the city of Carthage, dating from the days of Nehemiah, of Simon the Just, of Hannibal, of Hasdrubal. Nearly ten thousand names of citizens of ancient Carthage are on record now—a city directory, as my late master, M. Philip Berger, so well put it, together with a complete catalogue of professions, of rituals, of usages, of manners. And, most valuable of all, we have found again the ancient language and writing of Canaan, the rich, idiomatic speech of a city which once counted

seven hundred thousand inhabitants. And we Hebrew writers, we who write and feel in our biblical tongue, have recognized at once that this so-called Phoenician language is nothing more nor less than Hebrew—a pure Hebrew dialect, nearly the same as was spoken in the country of Israel in the days before the Aramaic, and before the Masora came to fix its orthographic rules artificially. The same thing is true of the script, which is—with a few minor differences—that of the Hebrew (עברית), as opposed to the square script (Assyrian אשורית), which was used in the time of David and the Prophets until the period of the Maccabees. Thus language and script show us that this Phoenician is for us Hebraists nothing but Hebrew. The population of Carthage was Palestinian in origin and Hebraic in civilization, and if, instead of succumbing, the city of Hannibal had triumphed over Rome, it is probable—nay, almost certain—that Hebrew, and not Latin, would have become the dominant language of the Mediterranean countries. It is certain, then, that it was in a Hebrew dialect that Hannibal commanded the troops which he led across the Alps.

Hebrew in language and in civilization, the countrymen of Hannibal were cut off from their share in the Land of God for having despised the moral grandeur of the monotheistic conception. And yet, after all, can we be sure that all the Carthaginians worshipped Moloch, Saturn, Baal-Chronos, or Melkart, the gods of human sacrifice? Were there no wilful exaggerations in the accounts of the Roman writers and

historians, who sought to excuse and to justify the cruel treatment which Rome meted out to her unfortunate rival? Did not Tacitus—and others besides Tacitus—seek in the same way to slander the memory of our city Jerusalem, of our country Judea, such as she was before the destruction, with all her great aspirations for a happier humanity, with her pure spiritual conceptions?

No! The Carthage which is revealed to us by the thousands of documents which have been unearthed from her ashes, was a civilized society, a republic founded on the principles of justice and democracy, and forever resisting the power of oligarchy and aristocratic tyranny. It was a society similar to that which was to be found in Jerusalem and Samaria, where they were governed similarly, where they spoke the same tongue, where they worshipped their gods with the same phrases, and where they even did their thinking in the same way. Their religion, which was dominated by a trinity—Baal, Eshmon and Astarte-Tanit, three-in-one—was, as M. Berger has so clearly demonstrated, very similar to certain other pantheist-monotheistic religions. A hereditary high priesthood presided over this cult, and—judging from an inscription recently unearthed—the priests seem to have been descendants of Hiram, King of Tyre, while the ritual and sacrifices are almost adaptations from our book of Leviticus, and from the formulas of prayers and vows (אשר נדר), which are still in use in our synagogues.

But were all the Carthaginians trinitarians or polytheists? We learn from several inscriptions that side by side with the temples of Baal and of Tanit, of the Emanation, or "the Face of Baal," or the "Name of Baal," stood the temples wherein high priests ministered to Baal-"Shamaim," the God of heaven; other inscriptions indicate that certain tribes of Asher and of Zebulun lived in Carthage ever since the foundation of the city. On the most beautiful sarcophagus found by Père Delattre among the ruins of Carthage there is a seal which bears a Hebrew inscription—such as were common in Jerusalem—ליואב, to Joab! It is well known that this name is composed of two parts, יהו and אב: Jehovah is Father. A great lord of Carthage, therefore, bore the name of a Jew faithful to God. Equally surprising is the fact that the same name, Joab, that of David's general, figures in the folklore of Africa as the conqueror of that country. This name may be met with at Tlemçen, Tebessa and the Ud Nun in Mauretania. Other Phoenician inscriptions bear the theophoric forms of the name Jehovah, such as Joas, Joel, etc.

These theories were suggested to me by the results of the excavations made in Carthage during the last twenty years. As a member of the Semitic Mission of the French Academy I had occasion to observe these excavations in person. I was given the opportunity later of expressing my opinions on the subject —for in the present state of Phoenician archaeology it is impossible to make positive statements. A lecture which I delivered at the Institute of Carthage

on "The Hebrew and Phoenician Civilization of Carthage," was taken up by the general press and discussed by a number of notable scholars. In this work, based upon direct observation and documentary evidence, I shall content myself with a mere statement of the facts; I will only mention here that I still firmly believe that there never was a language of Canaan as such, and that it was merely a dialect of the language of the Hebrews.

But the interest of the Jewish reader will not be confined to Phoenician or Punic Carthage; Roman Carthage is a veritable storehouse for the Jewish historian. We need only mention Hammam-el-Lif, a watering place close to Tunis, where the ruins of a synagogue of the Roman epoch have been rediscovered; the Cape of Gamart, where a large Jewish necropolis, of an individual character, was discovered by Father Delattre; and then there are numerous inscriptions, Hebrew and Latin, scattered throughout the whole of this district, which bear witness to the importance of the Jewish community of Carthage in Roman times.

In previous historical essays the writer has treated of the persistent traditions in this country of a glorious Jewish past, traditions attached to the Judeo-Berber race, which, century after century, held out against the Romans and the Arabs. It was in the seventh century that this race of Bahuzim, or Jewish nomad warriors, rose in the desert under the leadership of the great Jewish Queen Daia, or Damia el Cahena, the priestess, celebrated for her beauty, her

wisdom and her heroism. A legendary halo has gathered round this woman, to whom French scholars have given the name "The African Joan of Arc;" to the writer, Daia el Cahena seems the greatest woman in history.

But not only do memorials of the glorious Jewish past, which has survived in legend and inscription, fascinate the Jewish student; the present, and perhaps even the future, of the Jews of this country mean even more to him. "Tunis is neither Arab nor European," writes Guy de Maupassant. "Tunis is, more than anything else, a Jewish city, and nowhere else are the Jews as much at home as in Tunis." And, indeed, Tunis, the inheritor of Hebrew Carthage, is the Eternal City of the Jews. For, like the phoenix, the Jews have risen again and again out of the ashes of their destruction. After the sacking of Carthage, the Jews were found again in Carthage under Roman domination; after the Byzantine persecutions, they fled into the desert, taking refuge there with their free brethren, only to return with the Jewish Queen, the Cahena, at their head. And even under the persecution of the Arabs, the Jews somehow managed to survive catastrophe after catastrophe.

And to-day, Tunis, the Jewish city, with its forty thousand of our coreligionists, men and women of a splendid Mediterranean type, imbued with a spirit of enterprise and persistence, and possessed of an amazing faculty for adaptation, which is bringing them nearer and nearer to the French type—Tunis rises again as the capital of African Judaism, destined to

play a leading rôle in the history of civilization, and in the modern transformation of the Jewish people.

The Jewish traveler in this country can only be thrilled by the strange chapters which open before him of the destinies of his immortal people. A great amount of research has gone to the compilation of the ensuing chapters of this work. A great deal of this history cannot be properly verified, for the Jews of Africa have left little of the written word. But where actual documentary evidence is lacking, the writer has fallen back on the stores of folk-lore and of ethnography, which make it possible to reconstruct the past of this country. The writer has avoided, as far as possible, allusions to such communities and rabbis as have already been written on, and has devoted himself to a recital of things that he has himself seen and lived through, and to a reproduction of documents hitherto unknown.

CHAPTER II

TUNIS

The traveller coming from the sea approaches Carthage by a long and narrow bay, to the left of which rise the two eminences of Bu and Karnin (the mountain sacred to Baal-Karnaim, the two-horned divinity of the Bible). On the right pass in succession the Cape of Gamart, the picturesque village of Sidi-Bu-Said, then the heights of the Marsa, the deserted green hills of Carthage, till at last the traveler sees the houses of the Goulette—the Coney Island of Tunis. The boat then enters the channel which passes through the Bahr or lake, and proceeds to the port of Tunis. It appears as a vast conglomeration of houses, towers, and white and blue and yellow minarets, and beyond, the Belvedere Park and sloping green fields. Seen from the heights above the city Tunis is very picturesque; set in the midst of lakes and hills, its towers rise to the blue Mediterranean sky like the masts of a mighty fleet.

To-day the town consists of three parts. The French section, with broad boulevards and luxurious shops, is a rich modern city, an outcome of the French occupation of 1882; the large Arab city, or Kasba, with its rectangular bridges and its towers and terraces, is truly oriental; but by far the most interesting section is the Hara, or the Jewish city.

Maupassant has given us a fine description of this curious Jewish city, with its beautiful women and children, with its brightly colored garments; the women are extraordinarily fat, and deliberately so, for among them fat legs are considered a sign of great beauty. He also describes their costumes of red, rose or green, the round or conical "kufia" (handkerchief) worn on the head, the "bah-kir" about their shoulders, the silken "calice," the voluminous trousers, worn without doubt to accentuate their quantitative attractions, and their embroidered slippers. He has described the labyrinthine *suqs*, or markets, those dark, winding galleries, with the merchants sitting or kneeling in their niches, selling every variety of merchandize. Here every profession has its own street, its own *suq*—and, speaking generally, there are a number of professions which are peculiar to the Jews. As merchants, they deal in stuffs and in haberdashery; they are jewellers, perfumers, tinsmiths, cobblers, etc. In the streets of the bazaars they sell all sorts and manners of objects.

But on Saturdays the old town takes on a distinctly Jewish aspect, showing how the Hara dominates the rest of the population. These things have been commented on so often by travellers that we need not pause over them.

Heir to Carthage, Tunis, the greatest city of Barbary, has always possessed a Jewish population; the "Sifre" seems to bear out this view.

In 1160, the city was destroyed by the Almohades. "I lie in ashes because (of the misery) of Tunis," says

the author of an elegy of this period.[48] A little later the city was to see its Jewish community abandon its faith.

In 1537, the Jews were bitterly persecuted by the Spaniards, who at that time occupied the north of Tunis. Many Jews were massacred, and others led into captivity. Under the domination of the Beys they maintained a more or less precarious existence, but exerted great influence in public affairs—as was the case in other Mussulman countries. The influence of Italy and of the Italian Jews made itself felt in Tunis throughout the nineteenth century, until the time of the French occupation in 1882.

The Jewish community consists of two parts: the Livornese and the Tunisians. The former, though they did not number more than two thousand at the time of the occupation, were the richest and most influential, and, thanks to their Italian and Spanish origin, were able to maintain relations with Europe. The Tunisians, who are of African origin, as is evident from their type, their customs and their ethnic names, came from the South or from the Sahara. Though they resemble the Jews of Tripoli, they are much more European in their manner of life.

There has never been any sympathy between the Livornese and the Tunisians. The predilections of the latter for fat women, and their vulgar superstitions, have always stood between them and their coreligionists, who, judging them from the European point of view, have found them not only backward

[48] P. 222, line 4 from bottom.

and uncivilized, but actually unbearable. For centuries this antagonism has found vent in religious and social disputes.

Prior to the French occupation the Jews, with very few exceptions, lived in or near the Hara. They were subjected to humiliations of every kind, as they still are in Morocco. There existed, however, a class of wealthy bankers who were powerful at court, and who often managed to protect their coreligionists.

Since the French occupation, there have been many changes. The Gallicizing process has gone forward rapidly with the aid of the Government and the Alliance Française schools. The schools of the Alliance contain some three thousand pupils, whilst the government schools take care of as many again. The new generation, industrious and very much alive, is rapidly throwing off the Arab influence. The modern sections of the city are occupied by Jews. Merchants, artisans and workmen are all leaving the old city. The transformation is going on apace. Already their traditional garb has disappeared. The fat woman is giving way to the slim and elegant lady. The Arab language is being replaced by French. On the other hand, the standard of morality is being lowered, and family life is being broken up. Hebrew is being neglected, even in the Jewish schools, whilst rabbinic studies are disappearing. Charity alone flourishes, a credit to those who are its mainstay.

Above all, the Jews of Tunis seem to have no conception of solidarity. Among the older people one still meets with such men as Abraham Castro, Shalom

Flah, Simha Levy, Joseph Tanuji, etc., those real "maskilim," or Rabbi Solomon Dana, who gave up all his life to the dissemination of Jewish studies, and whose Yeshibah has produced several Hebraists. But the majority of the young people lack serious education, and all that modern civilization has taught them is love of pleasure. They see in civilization nothing more than cafés, theatres and gambling games. It is true, of course, that most of the older people still cling to their Judeo-Arab literature, the only significant literature that there is in the dialect; there are many Jewish newspapers, both daily and weekly, and there is a real, intellectual minority which still keeps up the spiritual struggle. The greatest preoccupation of the modernized Jews is their legal status. The efforts of M. Smaja, the popular editor of "Justice," to remove the disabilities from which the Jews suffer under Mussulman law, have received enthusiastic support, but they have hitherto been unsuccessful because of lack of organization and of interest among the Jews of Paris. Among the most disinterested workers for the Jewish renaissance in Tunis must be mentioned my friend Alfred Valensi.

The shores of the Marsa and the Goulette, near Carthage, offer a splendid opportunity, in the summer months, for the study of the transition through which the Jews of Tunis are passing to-day.

The Goulette should be seen on Saturdays. All the Jews of Tunis then turn out to show themselves and to take the air. In the streets, near the bathing places, on the terraces of the cafés and casinos, promenade

groups of Jews. There are the matrons, enormous mountains of flesh, dressed in short, childish blouses, with their short fat legs in clown-like pantaloons. Many wear on their heads tiny, pointed bonnets, with ribbon streamers. They wear laced shoes or satin slippers, bracelets of gold and silver, and lavish embroidery wherever there is place for it. But already these ancient costumes are giving place to European attire. The girls of the new generation are transformed, acquiring a beauty which haunts the European traveller. The mother is still Arab, but the daughter, in elegant bathing costume, lithe and slender, is Parisian to her finger-tips. The transformation is complete. The father, half Arab, half European, adopts a broad gandura at the baths and wears an automobile cap.

Round about ancient Carthage the Jews are to-day the dominating race—and this despite the persecutions of the Romans, despite the humiliations they suffered at the hands of the Arabs and despite their legal status, which is still precarious. The firmly established population of Tunis is that of the Hara.

By their diligence, their physical and moral make-up, their adaptability and their sane materialism, the Jews have well earned equality of treatment. They promise, in making a place for themselves, to be of high service to civilization. But, placed between the Arabs and the Europeans, will these Jews attain once more to that solidarity and race consciousness which has characterized them in ages past? During my

travels in this country I have often regretted the absence of a few hundred Russian Jews who, with their nervous vitality, might furnish the initiative and energy which these Jews lack. I dealt with this problem in 1911, when I delivered before the young Jews of Tunis a series of lectures in French and in Hebrew, and tried to persuade them to take a more earnest view of the questions which confront the modern Jew. I had the satisfaction of learning that my words had borne fruit.

No man can look without emotion on the ruins of Carthage. To the Jew their appeal is a thousand-fold stronger than to any other traveller. Under the ruins of this ancient capital, queen of maritime cities and glorious rival of Rome, lie buried thirty centuries of civilization. All that we have learned of this one-time metropolis, as revealed by the inscriptions unearthed in the ruins, by the language, the proper names, the ritual and the life of those days, all these go to show that there was a time when Jerusalem was not the only city of God where Baals and Molochs disputed for the possession of the Jewish soul. These *suffet* or *shofetim*, whose names are Himmelec, Hanan, Hannabaal, Mattan, Elisha, these votive stones (*neder*), these rules of sacrifice which are taken from Leviticus, speak of a distinct development of Jewish civilization. They represent an epoch when the Hebrews (*'Ibrim*) dominated the history of the Jews and the Phoenicians, when the two peoples spoke the same language, lived under the same civilization, and used the same script, the *'Ibrit* of the Talmud, the

script which our own ancestors used before they adopted the so-called Assyrian square script.

Might it not be said that there was a time when this beautiful Canaanite language ruled in Carthage, the rival of Greek and Latin even in an epoch when Greek had already conquered the Orient? And, as we have already intimated, if Rome had failed to crush Carthage, neither Latin nor the Roman Law would have been the heritage of the Mediterranean, but the language of David and Hannibal, and the law of Moses and of Hiram.

But how different from these dreams is the reality! As the traveller steps from the local tramway station at Carthage, he finds himself in the midst of deserted green fields, a region extremely picturesque, but utterly devoid of any trace of departed glory. One hill, higher than the others, is crowned by a cathedral in the Byzantine style. This is Byrsa, the citadel of the ancient city of Carthage. From the top of the hill the view is wonderful. The waters of the narrow bay are intensely blue, and the air around the hill is marvellously pure.

The Cape of Gamart runs into the broad sea, and opposite, the divided summits of Bu Karnin of Zagun face toward the South. Beyond lie the cisterns of Mapalia, and the grottoes which excavations have proven to be the Carthaginian necropolis. Near the sea were the temples of the Celestial Goddess and of Moloch, and on an island may still be seen the ruins of the ancient roadstead of Coton.

I was equally attracted by the Lavigerie Museum,

which is situated near the cathedral of St. Louis. I was filled with envious interest by the sight of those accumulated relics, which scholarship owes to the coöperation of M. le Marquis de Vogüé and M. Philip Berger, and to the efforts of the Abbé Delattre. Many of the finest archaeological discoveries were the work of the Abbé Delattre. In the cavern cemeteries are found the tombs of Rabs, Cohanim, and one tomb bears the name of a grandson of Hiram. Every work of art and every inscription which has been unearthed is now in the Museum of St. Louis, which is a wonderful treasure-house of historic relics.

There have been other successful workers in the field of Carthaginian archaeology. The Alaoui Museum of Tunis contains a large number of monuments and inscriptions which have been discovered at Carthage. In the garden of the Museum of Carthage I saw a very beautiful marble sarcophagus, the work of a Greek artist, dating from the fourth or fifth century B.C. On the sarcophagus was carved a ring with a Hebrew inscription, in characters resembling those used in Jerusalem in the seventh century: Joab. It seems as if there must have been "Rabs" among the Carthaginians, lords who bore Jewish theophorous names; there was certainly one among the lords of Carthage, several centuries before the fall of the city, who was a worshipper of the God of Israel.

In Roman times the Jews of Carthage were numerous. They are spoken of by the Fathers of the Church and by the Talmud. From among them came several amoraim, like Rabbi Aba, Rabbi Hanan, etc. At

Marsa, at Sidi-bel-Abbas, everywhere, Jewish inscriptions may be found, whilst a whole collection of them has been gathered together in the Museum of Carthage. Whilst looking through the latter I came across several inscriptions in which occurred the word שלם (*shalom*); and in the cases of the museum there are numerous seven-branched candlesticks, Jewish amulets, etc. In the same museum there is a piece of mosaic work, representing Jesus treading the Jewish candlestick under-foot—the symbol of the struggle between the two religions which was then beginning.

A number of Jewish antiquities have been discovered under the Jebel Bu Karnin, south of Tunis, on the shore at Hammam-el-Lif, which is a popular health resort. It was hereabouts that in 1887 the captain of the "Prudhomme" discovered the remains of a synagogue. This synagogue dates from Roman times, possibly from the third century.

Among the ruins there were found several slabs of rich mosaic work. I saw these in the museum of Carthage. The text follows:

I. Sanctam synagogam Naronitanam pro salute sua ancilla tua Julia Naronitana de suo propio tesselavit.

II. Asterius filius Rustici arcosinagogi Margarita Riddei partem portici tesselavit.

This is an archaeologic document of the first importance, proving that there were Jews and a synagogue at Naro near the Thermae (baths) in the Roman epoch.

To Father Delattre belongs the credit for the discovery of the Jewish necropolis on the Cape of Gamart to the north of Carthage. I paid a visit to this place and was profoundly impressed by the likeness—already remarked on by M. de Vogüé—of this vast necropolis, stretching along the Jebel Khau, to the tombs of the Kings and the other Jewish classic tombs of Palestine. I saw the hundreds of caves cut out of the limestone; these caves are rectangular hypogea which one enters by means of steps. In the walls deep niches are cut as deep as the trenches in which the dead were placed. The epitaphs are either painted or engraved, some in Hebrew, but the greater part in Latin, with symbolic designs around them; seven-branched candlesticks, vines and grape-gatherers, horsemen, winged genii, even busts representing the dead. The tombs, which are in the form of *gogions* or kilns, conform to talmudic specifications.

Thus we see that besides Phoenician and Roman Carthage, there was a third, the Jewish Carthage of the Roman and perhaps even of the Vandal period, a great community, highly civilized, wealthy, tolerant and powerful. How did it come into being? How did it disappear? Some day archaeological research will penetrate this mystery.

In the Museum of St. Louis there is a Jewish stone. It was found in the ruins of Carthage, but Father Delattre has not been able to determine the exact locality of the discovery. On the stone may be read the word שָׁלוֹם, Peace. The characters are archaic in

form, particularly the ו. There is no doubt that this stone dates from the Roman epoch. Besides the text, there are two candelabra, one on each side of the inscription. This sacred symbol is found on many Jewish tombstones not only in Rome, but in Carthage, Gamart and other places. I have myself unearthed carvings of a candelabrum at St. Paul, at Malta and at Cyrene.

But more interesting than the inscription are the three figures engraved on the stone, representing other sacred Jewish objects, which may be found to this day in our synagogues. To the right of the first candelabrum there is a long palm-branch, the *lulab* of the Feast of Tabernacles. At the base there is a horn, or *shofar*, and a fruit, which may well be the citron or a strange *etrog* which, together with the palm-branch, forms part of the ritual of the Feast of Tabernacles.

A fragment of another inscription, dating from the Roman epoch, composed in part of numbers (without doubt a kind of synagogue almanac), has been mentioned by me elsewhere.[49]

[49] See "Un Voyage d'Etudes Juives en Afrique."

CHAPTER III

Kairuan

A four hours' railway journey from Tunis brought me to the pretty town of Susa—the ancient Hadrumetum, where a number of Jewish amulets of the Roman epoch have been discovered. The ancient community was wiped out in the twelfth century by the Almohades. To-day the village contains more than three thousand Jews, who resemble closely the Jews of Tunis.

A narrow railroad leads from Susa across an interminable desert plain to Kairuan, the Holy City of the Mussulmans of Africa—"The Whitest of the White." Suddenly there arises a startling vision of ramparts and terraces and domes, dazzling in their whiteness, more like a mirage than a reality. There is a serene majesty about the old crenellated walls, behind which are grouped innumerable cupolas and minarets, gleaming like rare faience in the sunlight. Kairuan the Holy lies in front of us, in the midst of the sunlit plain, with her fifty mosques towering above the *suqs* and narrow streets. Silence reigns; the blue sky gleams above the domes, while from under the red flags floating from the minarets the Muezzin calls the faithful to prayer. At the sound, hundreds of white figures surge into the streets from the houses hidden behind their encircling walls, and disappear into the

mosques. The Great Mosque, with its countless columns, fashioned after every style, with its vast court paved with mosaic, fills with thousands of worshippers.

This massive mosque of Sidi Okba with its garment of dazzling limestone—with its five hundred ancient columns, with its towering minarets, with its Roman stones, and its vast paved courtyard, where the kneeling Arabs, enveloped in their white *bournous*, give themselves up to the melancholy and the ecstasy of prayer—is the Orient incarnate.

Then, outside the walls of the city, the Mosque of the "Barber," Jama Sidi Sahab, a companion of Mohammed, seems to hurl defiance at the "Rumi" invader. I passed many hours in the silent streets and *suqs* of the city, with its docile and impassive population living its own life far from all European influence.

The children of the desert have long ago abandoned Carthage, the maritime city, whilst Kairuan, whose name means "the caravan of the desert," is still a flourishing city. Here, in this religious capital, the African Mussulman dwells apart.

But Kairuan is not merely a Mussulman city. There was a time when it was a Jewish city. The Califate Empire, which made Kairuan its capital, attracted a strong Jewish population. From the very day of its foundation Kairuan became the capital of African Judaism. The Jewish leaders and Rabbis of this city are known everywhere. In the eighth century the Exilarch (Rosh Hagolah), Rabbi Natronai,

visited the city; in the ninth century Eldad the Danite passed through the city, leaving there records of his marvellous adventures in search of the lost ten tribes.

In the year 913 Ukba, the Babylonian exilarch, was received in the city with royal honors. From that time onwards Kairuan became a center of Jewish science. In the tenth century Rabbi Hushiel, Rabbi Hananel, Rabbi Jacob ben Shahin and Rabbi Nissim founded the celebrated rabbinic school. Isaac Israeli, the famous physician and philosopher, revived the science of medicine among the Arabs; and hardly less distinguished than he was his pupil, Dunash ben Tamim, the physician and grammarian. The light of the School of Kairuan gleams through Jewish tradition to our own day. But all this glory was destined to pass away. Kairuan was devastated again and again, the Hara suffering more than any other part of the city. In 1056 the city was razed to the ground, and it was then that Abraham Ibn Daud wrote: "And from that day the Talmud ceased in Africa." Rebuilt later, Kairuan became the Holy City of the Mussulmans, closed to Christians and Jews alike. As late as the eighteenth century four Jews who had dared to penetrate into the city were burned alive.

To-day it is impossible to find the site of the ancient Hara. I appealed in vain to the administration and to the Mussulman clergy. Not a single trace could be found of the old Jewish habitations. The simoon of the desert has buried the glorious past of our ancestors.

Kairuan the Jewish, the city of great scholars, has become like Sodom and Gomorrah.

However, the Jewish community rose again from its ashes. The French conquest of 1887 opened wide the doors of the city to admit the Israelites. To-day more than a hundred Jewish families live and prosper in the city. The head of the community spoke to me of the need of a Jewish school, as a measure of defence against the unnatural vices of the place which are affecting the Jewish youth.

Although every trace of Judaism has disappeared from Kairuan, the Jews of Africa have their own version of local Jewish history. They assert that the Mosque of Sidi Okba is the ancient synagogue of Ukba the Exilarch, which was seized by the Mussulmans. The Mosque of Sahab, that is, "of the Companions of the Prophet," is, according to them, the tomb of Rabbi Hananel and of Rabbi Nissim, the *haberim*, or Jewish scholars. With such childlike tales do the Jews console themselves for the persecutions which they have endured, for the loss of the last traces of their former glory and for the humiliations to which they are subjected even to-day. For, despite their fanaticism, the Arabs permit the Christians to visit the sacred mosque which they desecrated in 1882. Only the native Jews are denied entrance.

Just opposite the Sahab there is a gigantic anchor, whereof many marvellous tales are told.

From Kairuan a local railroad leads to Moknin, a very ancient Jewish settlement. Moknin contains about a hundred and fifty Jewish families, which date

from the Middle Ages and are still observant Jews. There is nothing interesting about this community except that it claims to have come originally from the Isle of Jerba. Though more under French influence than the Jews of Tripoli, they still live in the Middle Ages. Their Rabbi, Isaac Bu Hubsa, who comes from Gabes, is a fine Hebrew scholar and an enlightened man—which is a rare phenomenon among African Jews.

At Moknin I learned that the Mussulmans of Hamamet still observe Friday evening as a time of rest, that this custom is observed in several other villages in the district, and that at Hamma, the Jewish community of which was destroyed in the twelfth century, there are a number of streets inhabited by the descendants of converted Jews.

CHAPTER IV

The Isle of Jerba (Gerba)

Jerba, the celebrated Island of Lotus-eaters of antiquity, is to-day still illustrious in African Jewish tradition. Countless legends are told of the Hara of the Island, of the Ghriba, or miraculous synagogue, of its Cohanim and its rabbis. And in these legends occur again and again the shadowy figures of Joab or Esdras.

The Island, situated in the Syrte, is to-day a Tunisian French Protectorate, but it still remains as unknown as the remotest parts of Central Africa, a place of legend and mystery.

It was in September, 1906, that I paid my first visit to the island. I took the boat from Tripoli and after ten hours' sailing came to Jerba. The landing had to be made in low water and was very dangerous and difficult. We disembarked in a country of green fields and luxuriant gardens, at Humet-es-Suq, the commercial center of the island, which the French have commenced to beautify and Europeanize.

Jerba is closely populated, supporting some fifty thousand inhabitants on as many hectares of land. It is inhabited almost exclusively by Berbers who form part of one of the races said by local tradition to be of Palestinian origin. Like the Berbers of the Nefussa they possess many strikingly Jewish character-

istics. Like the latter, they are Abadites—heretics—with a mixed religion in which the Jewish element is very distinct. Their villages are small, and in every village there is to be found a little white mosque.

The Jeraba, as they are called, have a unique reputation as an industrious and energetic people. They are gardeners, horticulturists, merchants, sailors, potters and fishermen. Their pottery and their carpets enjoy a high reputation. Lacking springs and rivers, they have constructed a number of excellent cisterns. In the gardens which cover the island from end to end are grown the lotus and the jujube-tree, and every variety of fruit tree from the palm and orange to the vine.

There are a few Europeans at Jerba. Apart from the Berbers, there are about five thousand Jews on the island.

At Humet-es-Suq, the administrative center of Jerba, there are several Jewish families, and a synagogue. The most prominent merchant in the city is M. Jaccomio Pariente, a Moroccan by birth, who is the only "European" Jew in the place. But the larger part of the Jews are concentrated in the interior, in two small market towns, which are known respectively as Hara Kebira (the Great Hara) and Hara Saghira (the Small Hara).

Hara Kebira, an exclusively Jewish townlet, is about two kilometers from Humet. The road between the two towns runs through delightful country scenery, dotted with gardens and sown with palm-trees.

It was a Wednesday when I arrived in Hara Kebira,

and I was astonished by the bustle and liveliness in the market-place of this small town. The stalls were heavily laden with cakes, with meat, with fruits and with vegetables, and about them swarmed crowds of men and women, clad in the brightly colored garments of the Berbers.

I was to be even more astonished by the reception which awaited me at the hands of my coreligionists. I passed through the market unnoticed. I was evidently taken for some French Colonial, loafing through the town. However, I no sooner struck up a conversation with an old rabbi than I began to perceive that as a Hebrew-speaking Jew I was to meet with anything but a friendly reception! I came to the town of Hara Kebira as it were on a visit to my brothers; I was received as if I were an enemy, a heretical Rumi!

In this town, which is one of the last centers of Talmudism in Africa, a bitter disillusionment awaited me. Talking on Jewish history and on the Jewish past with the most prominent members of the community, I perceived at once that all the intentions with which I had come to Jerba were received with contempt, because I was suspected of attempting to establish a modern school at Jerba. The Jew of Jerba fears nothing more than the founding of a modern school, which he looks upon as a focus of irreligion and demoralization.

I had been warned once before of the separatist character of this group. One of the Directors of the Alliance, who visited Jerba for the purpose of founding a modern school there, met with the unanimous

opposition of the rabbis. Instead of replying to his arguments, they asked him: "How much money does the Alliance want *not* to found a school at Jerba?"

In this attitude, so different from the attitude adopted by every other Jewish community I visited, may be sensed the arrogant isolation and obstinacy of the Berbers, who, under French tutelage, have become even more fiercely attached to their birthplace and to their past.

One curious fact about Jerba is the distinction which has been maintained at all times between the Cohanim and the members of the other tribes of Israel. Whilst the town of Hara Kebira is exclusively Jewish, non-Aaronide, the town of Hara Saghira, is exclusively Aaronide, like the towns which are mentioned in the Talmud.

The chief rabbinate is not, however, confined to the Cohanim; in consequence it may often come to pass that a non-Aaronide is Chief Rabbi of the Smaller Hara whilst a Cohen is Chief Rabbi of the Larger Hara. Sometimes the Chief Rabbi becomes the founder of a line of Chief Rabbis, and the result is that for a considerable time there may be a Cohen holding the Chief Rabbinate in the Large Hara, whilst a non-Aaronide holds the Chief Rabbinate in the Little Hara.

This is exactly the state of affairs to-day. Whilst an ordinary Israelite was Chief Rabbi in the Little Hara the Chief Rabbinate in the Great Hara was held by Jacob Ha-Cohen, the founder of the famous family and line of Sadocs of Jerba.

He was an altogether strange and interesting character. Small, sparely built, and well advanced in years, with very delicate and lively features, which were informed by intelligence touched with malice, he ruled the Jews of Jerba with a high hand. As soon as he was convinced that I had no intention of founding a modern school at Jerba, he became exceedingly courteous. He assured me of his sincere coöperation in my researches, but the only information which I owe to him is the fact that some time in his youth he had seen on the island an inscription dating from the tenth century.

I paid a visit to the large synagogue, and there I had the pleasure of ascertaining that nearly all the young people knew Hebrew well, and that the Torah had not yet deserted this obscure corner of Africa. But the Jews of the city are fanatical in the extreme.

After making a thorough study of the Great Hara, with its pious, industrious and obstinate population, I proceeded to the Little Hara. This time, forewarned by my reception in the Hara Kebira and convinced that any attempt to approach the community merely as a Jew, or as a rabbi, would meet with a rebuff, I decided to follow the advice of M. Pariente, and visit the Little Hara in my official capacity.

It chanced that the temporary governor of the Island of Jerba, M. Montroix, was an old college friend of mine, from the University of Paris. He issued an announcement to the religious heads and to the most prominent Jews, explaining the nature of

my official visit. In addition, M. Pariente, who acts as treasurer of the Ghriba, receiving the moneys sent from every part of Africa to this celebrated sanctuary, wrote to the most prominent members of the community explaining the purpose of my journey.

These precautions were not without effect. I was received by the Cohanim not only as a coreligionist, but as an influential and well-disposed official.

It is seven kilometers from Humet to Hara Saghira. I made the journey in an open carriage, through extremely pretty country.

The town itself, which contains some five hundred houses, presents a poorer appearance than Hara Kebira. I was received by a delegation consisting of the Chief Rabbi, R. Moses Ha-Zaken, and a number of prominent citizens, who awaited me on the terrace of the ancient synagogue.

Their welcome could not have been friendlier. It is true that I owed a good deal of this to the character of the rabbi; still, the ice was broken. Rabbi Moses, a non-Aaronide in a town exclusively Aaronide, is a tall, well-built man, some fifty-five years of age, with a frank, kindly and sympathetic countenance. I was able to convince myself very soon that he is not only an excellent Talmudist, equally acquainted with the writings of the Polish and the Sephardic authorities, but that he is a man of a gentle and generous disposition.

Half-an-hour after my arrival I was seated, as a friend and brother, among a gathering of rabbis and prominent citizens in the Yeshibah of Hara Saghira.

Among them there was an interesting character, rabbi Joseph Ha-Cohen, who, despite his ninety-two years, had retained his intellectual faculties in their full vigor. A true scholar, he had found the means, in this isolated island, of writing a treatise on Hebrew grammar. Many of the Cohanim were men of learning, true citizens of this city of Aaronides.

All of them know well and cling fondly to the same traditions. The first traditions of Jerba go back to the days of David and Solomon. These men have received it from their ancestors that there was once a stone in the island which bore the following inscription: "As far as this point came Joab, the son of Zeruia, in his pursuit of the Philistines."

It is well known that a similar tradition exists at Tlemçen, in Morocco, and that it was carried, during the Middle Ages, as far as Spain. It is my belief that this tradition is connected with the early Phoenician and Philistine colonizers of Africa, who took numbers of Israelites along with them. If the Phoenicians took with them their traditions of Hiram and Melkart, the Jews took with them theirs of David and Solomon and Joab.

The Cohanim of Jerba are divided into two families. One family, which came from Tangiers in the Middle Ages, bears the name of Tanuji, and is spread over the whole of Africa. The other family, native to Jerba and larger than the first, claims to be descended from a family of Aaronides of the race of Zadoc which seems to have migrated to Africa direct from Jerusalem at

the time of the destruction of the Holy City by Nebuchadnezzar.

It is said that these Cohanim brought with them one of the doors of the Temple of Solomon, and built a synagogue at Jerba, which they called "Delet" (the Door), after the holy relic of the Temple. Such a tradition existed at the time of Procopius (VIth century), but it was then connected with the synagogue of Borion. In later times, and under the influence of the Berber language, in which the letters "l" and "g" are interchangeable, the synagogue at Jerba came to be called "Deget." Thus, the community always referred to itself as "Kahal Deget," the Community of the Door (?).

Another tradition states that Esdras, himself a Cohen, came as far as Jerba to induce the Jews to return to Jerusalem. The Cohanim, such of them as there were in the island at the time, must have been quite comfortable in their new homeland, for they refused to return. Esdras pronounced a curse against them, saying that never would any descendant of theirs return to the Holy Land, and never would a Levite set foot on the soil of Jerba.

It is curious to note that a similar tradition exists among the Jews of Yemen; but still more curious is the fact that till this very day it is impossible for a Levite to live among the Jews of Jerba. No *Shaliah* from Jerusalem who is a Levite would dare to disembark at Jerba; and never would the community of Jerba dare to receive one into their midst.

The traditions concerning the Middle Ages are

vague and confused. From a study of the names of the inhabitants I have come to the conclusion that in the island of Jerba a bitter struggle for supremacy between the Rabbis and the Cohanim went on side by side with the conflict in Africa, ending, after the founding of the celebrated school of Kairuan, with the triumph of the rabbinate.

However this may be, the genealogical tables of the Cohanim which I have been able to examine do not go back further than the tenth century. The following is a copy of the genealogical table which has been preserved by the Cohanim of Jerba, and which goes back twenty-seven (to-day thirty-seven) generations. It is taken from a work of rabbi Hayyim Ha-Cohen Jerbi of Tripoli:

צמח הכהן, בן סעיד, בן שלמה, בן משה, בן בגדיד, בן בוראתי,
בן תמאם, בן עמרם, בן מבורך, בן שלמה, בן בגדיד, בן כליפה,
בן סעיד, בן פנחס, בן אברהם, בן משה, בן שלמה, בן פרץ,
בן מוסא, בן שאול, בן ישראל, בן בגדיד, בן חזקיה, בן מתתיה,
בן יצחק הכהן הזקן הבא מן הגולה.

TRANSLATION:

"Zemah the Cohen, son of Sayid, son of Solomon, son of Moses, son of Bagded, son of Burati, son of Tamam (Tamim), son of Amram, son of Meborak, son of Solomon, son of Bagded, son of Califa, son of Sayid, son of Phinehas, son of Abraham, son of Moses, son of Solomon, son of Perez, son of Musa, son of Saul, son of Israel, son of Bagded, son of Hezekiah, son of Mattathias, son of Isaac the Cohen, the ancient, who came from the exile."

Which is the exile here alluded to? According to a very ancient tradition, these Jews came from Morocco at the time of the wars against Johis the First, the first Sultan of Morocco (Cohen, History of the Jews of Northern Africa).

In any case it is certain that there were Jews in Jerba in the tenth century, for a funeral stone with an inscription from this epoch has been found. It has been read by rabbi David Ha-Cohen, and M. T. Poznansky has seen it. I regret that I myself have not seen it. Again, the Island of Jerba served as a refuge to the Jews who fled from Tripoli in the twelfth century.[50]

Jerba was one of the sufferers from the persecutions of the Almohades. The addition to the Elegy mentions Jerba as one of the cities forgotten by Ibn Ezra. It may be that the genealogical tables of the Cohanim really go back to this epoch. Until this day the Cohanim of Jerba feel toward the Tripolitan Jebel as toward a second home, and there is in that district an abandoned village which bears the name of Cohen.

It must always be remembered that in the letter attributed to Maimonides, the Jews of Jerba, like those of the Nefussa, are identified with the Jews established among the Berbers, that hard and obstinate population which has preserved its intense local feeling down to our own day.

In an exchange of opinions between the Rabbis of Africa and those of Palestine on the question of the

[50] See the Elegy of Ibn Ezra above, p. 221 f.

Haftarah selections, which are different at Jerba, at Msellata, etc., it was admitted that Jerba had a right to her own customs, inasmuch as her history as a community antedated the compilation of the Talmud. Thus, on the Sabbath before the ninth of Ab, Chapter 22 of Isaiah is read, instead of Chapter 1, and on the week of the portion *Shemot*, the *Haftarah* is the sixteenth Chapter of Ezekiel.

Jerba suffered with the rest of northern Jewish Africa from the Spanish occupations of 1510 and 1540. She went through several crises at the time of the wars between Tripoli and Tunis (toward the end of the eighteenth century).

Joseph Cohen has informed me that in this district there are a number of ancient ruins, close to a Roman bridge. The old Rabbi, Joseph Ha-Cohen, has seen some very old tumulary inscriptions, dating from the tenth century, on which were the names of two Cohanim. Some forty years ago, however, at the time of the reconstruction of the Ghriba, it was thought that a greater degree of sanctity would attach to the building if all the epitaphs found on the island were placed in the foundations of the building.

"What reason is there for keeping them?" the old rabbi asked. "Our traditions suffice to convince us of the great antiquity of our sanctuary, whilst if these memorial stones of the just are built into the foundations, they cannot fail to increase the sanctity of the Temple." The historian, robbed of a number of exact documents, fails to be convinced by this primitive logic.

With this brief survey we will leave the historic side of our study and return to the present.

There is always a good deal of talk in Jerba on the general situation of the Jews. They complain that they are always subject to the jurisdiction of the Arabs, who discriminate against them. As a rule the Arab is mean-minded and envious. In his dealings with a Jew he often has recourse to the most cowardly methods. Thus, he accuses him of having insulted the Prophet; such an accusation is recognized as valid by the justice of the local government, and the misdemeanor is punishable by law. It is quite true that at one time this kind of accusation used to be levelled against the Jew much more than it is to-day, but in those times, when there was no administrative control, everything could be done with money. There also existed then a whole class of privileged Jews, who were entitled to the protection of foreign powers.

Jerba is an exportation center. It exports rabbis, and even Cohanim, a very rare commodity in Africa, where there are whole districts without a single Aaronide. There is quite a lively trade with foreign countries in tapestry, corn and fruits. But the principal occupations, which are hereditary, are those of the jeweller and of the manufacturer of date whiskey. Two recent decrees have deprived some two hundred families of their incomes: one decree prohibits the manufacture of date whiskey for sale, and the other makes it obligatory that all precious metal work be stamped at Tunis.

There are still at Jerba locksmiths, tinsmiths, masons,

carpenters, and, on the *suq*, dyers who color the tapestries woven on the island; there are also perfumers, haberdashers, glovers, money-changers and several usurers.

Generally speaking, the French occupation has brought with it a greater degree of security and a consequent increase in trade. The Jews who have gained the confidence of the Berbers, have been the ones to benefit most from this increase in commerce, to the resentment of the Christians.

The Little Hara, the City of Priests, boasts the most venerated sanctuary in Africa. This sanctuary bears the name Ghriba—the Lonely, the Miraculous one—in common with five other synagogues in Africa. The other name, which is less certain, is Deget, or Delet.

My first visit to this synagogue was in the company of all the prominent citizens of the Little Hara. Like all the ancient sanctuaries, the Ghriba is situated in the fields outside the city. The actual site is a charming valley in the middle of uneven country covered with jasmine. The Jews affirm that at one time their village stood opposite the Ghriba, on the ground now occupied by the Berber village; the Mussulmans, coveting the excellent supply of water, made them evacuate the old village. At the same time, however, the Mussulmans themselves hold the sanctuary in profound veneration, and would never dare to profane it.

The synagogue is a small, simple building, square in shape, with a low cupola, all of recent construction. Opposite the synagogue a row of houses was being

constructed. The houses were intended for the numerous sick who come to Jerba from every corner of Africa, including far away Egypt and Morocco, trusting in the miraculous curative forces of the sanctuary. The Ghriba is a sort of Jewish Lourdes, not without its Mussulman and even its Christian votaries. In the vestibule I saw, by the light of a number of oil lamps, ten old men, who sat there reciting passages from the Zohar and the Psalms. These are literally the "Asarah Batlanim," whose sole source of income is the generosity of the charitably minded. The vetibule, which was added very recently, is built with columns. Only one part of the old wall, the part near which the late rabbi Samuel Ha-Cohen, one of the saintliest and most venerated rabbis of the island, used to pursue his studies, remains intact, for no one has dared to lay hands on it.

Before I was permitted to enter the Ghriba I was requested to remove my footgear, after the Mussulman fashion. I was then ushered into a large clean room. Some twenty columns of carved wood supported the roof, and near one end of the narrow room was a very high *bima*, whilst around it ran a gallery. I was told that this nave had remained intact, and had been, in fact, the nucleus of the old building. There was nothing striking or singular about the sanctuary. It was a typical African synagogue, with its Arabianized Byzantine columns, but without any peculiar decorations. Right at the end of the building was the Holy of Holies, where some hundred scrolls of the Sefer Torah were kept. These were the gifts of

visitors, and on the covering of most of them was inscribed the name of the donor. The oldest of them does not go back beyond the seventeenth century. On asking what had become of the older ones, I was informed that as soon as the rollers of a scroll were worn out, it was the custom to bury the Sefer Torah with the body of some scholar or holy Cohen.

I left the synagogue a little unsatisfied. It was indeed interesting to hear these good people talk about traditions going back as far as Esdras; beyond their talk there was not a single trace of these traditions.

The Ghriba is a sanctuary dating from the Middle Ages, and for the source of the traditions connected with it, it was necessary to look elsewhere, perhaps in the north of the island.

Rabbi Joseph Ha-Cohen had already made mention of some tradition similar to the one attaching to the Ghriba. I verified the existence of this tradition by a visit to El Kantara, some twenty-eight kilometers to the north. Close to this place is the site of an ancient Roman bridge; the ruins, which are very imposing, indicate that the structure must have been some six kilometers in length. El Kantara was the commercial center of the island in Roman times. During my inquiries I discovered that the nearby mosque goes by the name of Jama-el-Hara, or, the Mosque of the Jewish Town. This may mean that the mosque was at one time a Jewish sanctuary. Close to this Hara was discovered a cavern cut in the rock, in the style of the ancient tombs of the grottoes of Gamart. It is

impossible to speak with any degree of certainty on this subject, as the Spaniards who occupied the island in the sixteenth century erected a basilica. A number of relics of this basilica are to be seen in the Bardo Museum at Tunis.

An old cemetery adjoins the Ghriba, but not a trace of an inscription could I find.

For lack of any archaeological material, I must now confine myself to present conditions on the island.

In a talk with Rabbi Zaken I asked why the Jews of the island had refused to adopt M. Pariente's suggestion of founding an Official Committee of the Communities of Jerba, and added that the Talmud itself recommends that there be named in every country a Committee consisting "of the seven chosen of each city." The rabbi replied with a smile:

"You are quite right. If men like yourself had been here before, to speak to us about such institutions as the *Shib'ah Tube Ha'ir*, something might have been done. But the people who came before you did not understand even the elementary principles of Judaism, and all their talk of 'schools' and 'committees' and benevolences and what-nots was perfectly meaningless to us. We can see very distinctly the good results of our Talmud Torah and of our study of the Torah, but who knows what would be the result of all these innovations?"

This reply, together with a number of observations which I made on other occasions, convinced me of one thing: we need not give up in despair the idea of introducing these changes into Jerba, one of the

strongholds of African Judaism. Jerba, just because it possesses a class of learned rabbis who hold themselves apart from the rest of the world, is perhaps in the best condition to realize the ideal which has been set by a French statesman, a man of acute observation—that of *Gallicizing the Jews without dejudaizing them.*

On the learned piety of the people of Jerba the dazzling light of an old civilization, even when imperfectly presented, will not have the demoralizing effect which has been remarked among most African Jews. Here, after the diligent study of the Torah, there is bound to follow the period of the *Haskalah*, and already several of the younger rabbis are regular readers of a Hebrew journal, and follow with the greatest eagerness the writings of Calman Schulman.

Jerba, once a center of the Aaronides, in the days when the Cohanim were still the religious heads of the communities, even as the rabbis were in the rabbinic epoch, is yet destined to become a center of Hebraism.

Again, the Jews of Jerba have a whole cycle of poetry and of popular tales in Judeo-Berber. In pride of "spirituality" and in their aristocratic pretentions they rival the Jews of Tunis. The Jews of Jerba, however, always know how to turn the march of events to their own advantage.

The civilizing work of France in Southern Tunis goes on continuously. As part of this work, she has founded a number of military stations, which are the nuclei of future cities. Few French civilians are to be found near these stations, which, under the aegis of

military protection, become places of security and centers of commerce. Apart from a few Maltese and Italians, the Jews are the sole influence in these new cities. The government readily grants land to the Jews to build their homes on, and in this way new and flourishing communities are springing up over the whole of the country.

Jerba the Jewish has already sent out four colonies, as faithful as herself to her rites and traditions: these are Zarzis, Medenin (with two hundred and fifty inhabitants), Tubor and Ben-gardin, all of them on the frontiers of the Jebel Nefussa. These villages already contain more than three hundred families who came from the island of Jerba.

In the city of Tunis a Jewish colony from Jerba occupies a street near the *Suq-el-Lelli*. The customs of this little immigrant colony are not particularly pleasant, and it is not looked upon with friendly eyes by the Tunisians.

When I returned from Jerba, I paid a visit to the little port of Zarzis, which has become a center of commerce for the Jews of Jerba. The Jews of this little town lead a somewhat more modern life than the Jews of Jerba. They are merchants, tailors, road-men, silver-smiths, etc. They have remained singularly faithful to the traditions of their little mother-country. The rites and customs they observe are those of Jerba. Their Rabbi, Shalom Ha-Cohen, who comes from the Hara Saghira of Jerba, is an old man of great learning and of very fine character. He is at once broad-minded, tolerant and sympathetic. It

was from him that I received confirmation of the traditions concerning the date of the emigrations of the Jews from the Nefussa.

The oasis of Gabes lies opposite Jerba on the continent. In this fertile country, with its broad river and its palm-trees, there are several Haras with a total population of about three thousand Jews. The oldest Hara is that of Jara, whilst the largest is that of Menzel. Some of the Jews are native to the country, and some of them have immigrated from Hamma—a very old Jewish settlement—from Matmata, from Medenin, where the Jews live in grottoes, and from Tozeur, where the Jews are primitive in type, and live by trading in dates. In the port of Gabes, which is a little French town, there are a few dozen Jews, merchants and artisans, who live in European fashion.

The rabbi of Menzel, Elia Alush, is the son of a Bahuzi, or Jewish nomad. I was present at his house during the ceremony of the cutting of the hair of his future son-in-law, who was to marry his daughter on the following day. In the yard three musicians, one playing a flute, the second a tambourine and the third a kind of hand-bell, accompanied the cutting of the hair with a mournful melody, while the guests drank whiskey and ate sweet-meats, showering congratulations and compliments upon the happy father.

The Jews of Gabes, like those of Tripoli, are still very backward. The groups of Jews, scattered through the interior of the country, have very old traditions. One priestly family, of Zadokite origin, lived a long time in the oasis bordering on Hamma.

Somewhat farther, towards the Shot el Jerid, there may still be found a group of nomad Jews, the "Yehud el Jerid," who are noted for their personal courage. In the eleventh century their ancestors offered valiant resistance to the Arab invaders of the Beni-Hillal.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries Gabes (קאביס) was famous for its scholars; many of them carried on a lively correspondence with the scholars and poets of Spain, of whom the most famous was Judah Halevi. But the persecutions of the Almohades made an end of the community. "My heart melts in me, seeing the fate of Gabes, the noble born!" the poet sings. The country never recovered from this blow. Only the family of Bu Hubza and a few Cohanim seem to possess any traditions anterior to this period.

North of Gabes is the modern port of Sfax, a large center of commerce. The community contains from two to three thousand souls, and their manner of living is somewhat modernized, thanks to the influence of the schools of the Alliance.

I made the journey from Sfax to Sus in an automobile, and on the way passed through El Jem, the ancient Thysdrus. At El Jem may still be seen the great Roman amphitheatre, a Coliseum in a much better state of preservation than that of Rome, and capable of seating eighty thousand spectators. In local tradition there is no memory of the origin of this building, which goes by the name of Kasr el Cahena, the fort of the great Jewish Queen of Africa.

CHAPTER V

The Persistence of Jewish Traditions.

We have seen that in all probability there were in Carthage and its dependencies large numbers of Jews, who followed the Phoenicians into Africa. In this, local tradition is in agreement with certain historical indications, while the manners and customs of the Jews of Tunis still give evidences of their ancient origin. There is not the slightest doubt that the Jew has persisted in these parts from the Roman epoch to our own times. Certain Jewish texts, passages in the Roman and Christian authors, and, finally, the numerous inscriptions found in Africa, all point to the importance of the rôle played by the Jewish element in Africa before the Arab invasion. This question has been studied elsewhere (Slouschz: "Hebraeo-Phéniciens et Judéo-Berbères"; Juster: "Les Juifs et l'Empire Romain").

Here we will merely mention that in the sixth century the Jews are known with certainty to have inhabited the following places:

I. The Proconsulate or Province of Carthage. Evidences are: Hebrew inscriptions, the carvings of the candelabrum, and other objects of the Mosaic cult, the necropolis of Gamart:
Naro, or Hammam-el-Lif: the remains of a synagogue and Jewish-Latin inscriptions:

Utica: Latin inscriptions.[51]
Bu Chatez: a Jewish inscription, the epitaph of a Jewish archon.
Hadrumetum:
Bizerta: Jewish governor in the seventh century, according to Kairuani, an Arab source.

II. Further south we find in ancient Byzantium, on the coast beyond Hadrumetum, the Jews of Tozeur (Thusurus) on Lake Triton, the Jews of Henshir Jana, and, to the east of Kairuan and further south, Jews at Gafsa, at Gabes and without doubt also at Jerba, etc.

III. In Numidia, in east Algeria, we learn of Jews at Hippo Regius (Bône[52]), on the coast; at Constantine (Cirta), at H. Fuara, and at the Kasr el Ghennaia, to the north of Lambessa, near the Aures.

IV. In Mauretania (western Algeria and Morocco); in Setif (Setiffi); in Tebessa (Acta Marcianae); Cherchel, Caesarea, (Passio Sae Salsae), Auzia, and Volubilis (Ksar Faraun[53]).

These colonies might well have been populated by the descendants of the Jews who came with the Phoenicians, but there were also large numbers of Jews who came from Palestine with the Romans.

[51] Cf. Corpus Inscr. Lat., VIII, 1205 and 931.

[52] "Un Pater de Synagogue," Corp. Inscr. Lat., VIII, 8423 and 8499.

[53] See Slouschz, "Etudes sur l'Histoire des Juifs et du Judaisme au Maroc."

An ancient tradition, which tells of thirty thousand Jews settled throughout the province of Carthage by Titus,[54] is corroborated by another tradition attributed to Josephus, which speaks of twelve boatloads of Jews landed by Titus in Tunis and in Mauretania.

These Israelites, who came to the country at different times and from different places, do not seem to have been united by any rabbinic synagogues. Among the Samaritans there were Sadducees, Zealots, etc., who were not acquainted with the Oral Law, and who lived in a rather primitive order of society recalling that of ancient Israel. From this epoch date the heroic legends concerning Joab, Joshua, David, Goliath, as also the clans of Aaronides, who, like Onias in Egypt, founded *Bamot*, or sanctuaries, in various places throughout the country. Agriculturists or nomads, military colonists or civil immigrants, these Hebrews wrote but little—and that in the *'Ibrit* or Phoenician characters—so that they have survived only in local folk-lore and in the ethnic characteristics which they have transmitted to their posterity.

Very different were the conditions obtaining among the Jews who came to the country after the destruction of the Temple. In the first place, most of them were thoroughly imbued with the Law of the Pharisees; in the second place, they had already become Romanized; these are the Jews referred to in the very earliest documents which we have concerning Judaism in this part of the world—the inscriptions unearthed concern-

[54] Slouschz, "Judéo-Hellènes et Judéo-Berbères."

ing their rituals, and the testimony of the Fathers of the Church.

An ancient talmudic text says: "From Tyre to Carthage and beyond is Israel known, and his Father who is in heaven."[55]

The Fathers of the Church, among whose writings we find so many references to the Jews of Carthage and to their conditions and customs, were well acquainted with this Jewish diaspora in Africa. St. Jerome says:

"A Mauretania per Africam et Aegyptum . . atque Persidem tendunt ad Indiam. Haec est Judaea, tuarum longitudo et latitudo terrarum."[56]

It is not our purpose here to go into the history of ancient Israel. We have only sought to make it clear that in the Roman epoch, at the beginning of the Christian era, there was a prosperous Jewish diaspora spread over the whole of Northern Africa as far as the shores of the Atlantic.

The consolidation of Christianity, in the fourth century, was to deal the first blow to the Jewish prosperity. Recovering again under the rule of the Vandals (fifth century), the Jewish population again expanded. The Jews established themselves among the Berbers, and there became the predominating element—so much so that after the Byzantine conquest (534) the most ruthless persecution failed to annihilate them.

Procopius, a Byzantine author, was acquainted with

[55] Slouschz, ibid.

[56] Epist. ad Dardanum.

the Jews who were dispersed among the Berbers, just as he knew the biblical traditions attaching to Northern Africa. Again, these Jewish Berbers and their traditions are known to the earliest Arab writers (Novairi, Al Bekri, Ibn Khaldun[57]).

As it is clear that the Jewish element persisted down to the Mussulman epoch, it is not difficult to trace its history from that period to our own times.

The destruction of Carthage took place in the year 698, but the foundations of Kairuan, the new capital, were laid in the year 665.

The Calif Abd-el-Malik ben Merwan sent a thousand Coptic and Jewish families to Kairuan. From Egypt came the wisdom of the School of Kairuan, even though later it took on a form and character entirely its own.

In 772 the exilarch rabbi Natronai went as far as Kairuan, there to spread rabbinical knowledge. The traditions of the savants of Kairuan go down to 1056, the year in which "the city was destroyed and the study of the Talmud broken off in Africa," as Abraham Ibn Daud says. In Kairuan rabbi Isaac Alfasi acquired the rabbinic knowledge which he later carried with him to Morocco and Spain. Another school existed among the Beni-Zogmar, at Kala (beni) Hamad.[58]

With the destruction of Kairuan, the center of Jewish activities moved to Morocco and to the north generally. It is certain that from the earliest times

[57] Translated into French by Slane.

[58] Chronicle of Ibn Daud.

there was a Jewish *Funduq* at Tunis, and a community inhabiting a place called Millassin.[59]

Tunis suffered with the other communities (Sus, Gafsa, Gabes, etc.) from the persecutions of the Almohades, but we find that in 1159 the saint Sidi Mahrej obtained for the Jews the site occupied by the present Hara; there they remained for centuries, exposed to every vicissitude, yet able to perpetuate their traditions. We see, then, that the nucleus of the present community was autochthonous, or of African origin.

Real rabbinic study did not return in full glory till the advent of the Spanish rabbis in Algeria in 1391, the year which marks a new epoch in the history of African Judaism.

In the Province of Tunis there were to be found numbers of Jewish refugees from Sicily and Spain, but the arrival of the Spaniards under Charles V (1530) marked the beginning of a series of bitter persecutions of the Jews of Tunis.

To-day the Jews of Tunis, like those of Tripoli, though in smaller numbers, are largely natives of the Berber country, and have little in common with their Spanish and Italian coreligionists, who, since 1710, have formed into a group which goes by the name of "Lighorni" (from Leghorn, in Italy). Most of the generic names of the Jews of Tunis are of Berber or of African-Arab origin, as for instance:

Arbib, Ankri, Allal, Assur, Bedussa, Bessis, Fregui, Cacubi, Didi, Duib, Filluz, Fitussi, Ghalula, Gandus,

[59] See Cazes, "Essai sur l'Histoire des Juifs de la Tunisie," p. 83.

Guetta, Guez, Hori, Jami, Jarmon, Juari, Juili, Ketorza, Lellush, Mazuz, Mellul, Memmi, Mesreni, Messari, Messica, Metosh, Sagrun, Shemama, Sberro, Serus, Serussis, Sfex, Sinurf, Sethon, Sitrug, Slakmem, Gafsi, Smaja, Smila, Shui, Temsit, Nefussi, Tartur, Attia, Tubani, Yunes, Zagdon, Zagron, Zemage, Zerafa, Zerti, Zetlawi, Zemur, Dania, Harari, Abizera, Abrahim, Goziel, Mimun, Lalo, Zano, Megholis, Kastilic, Auazani, Zaguani, Alush, Zerzani, etc. Most of these names are ethnic, showing the Berber or Saharan origin of the bearers.

The African origin of the majority of the Jews of Tunis explains their peculiar characteristics. Cazes and Vassel, who have made a study of these communities at first hand, have been able to furnish us with considerable additional evidence.

The first piece of evidence is found in their Hebrew writing, called Maghrabia, which differs from that of the Jews of other countries. The pronunciation of the letters resembles the pronunciation of the Arab alphabet. The kamez is always pronounced *a*, even the kamez katon (ex. כָּל is pronounced kal). The zere approaches the *i* in machine, and the hirek is pronounced like patah. The shevah is always silent; in the double shevah the second is pronounced *a*.

As regards consonants, the ב and פ are very similar, the ת is pronounced like *th* or *ch*, the ק like *g*, etc.

Their liturgy is almost the same as that used among the Sephardim, but there are a number of differences, particularly in the ritual of the festivals. The Piyyutim

of local authors (such as Rabbi Fragi) and the usages peculiar to these communities are very numerous.

In the reading of the Torah, the following changes may be mentioned: In a leap year they read the two *parashiyyot* at the end of Numbers as one, but, on the other hand, they divide the portion of *Mishpatim* into two parts: *Mishpatim* and *'Im Kesef*. There are also a number of differences in the reading of the *Haftarah*.

The largest differences are to be observed in the manner of slaughtering animals, which does not always conform to the code of rabbi Joseph Caro. This matter gave rise to long discussions between the two communities of Tunis, as it did in Morocco, between the immigrant Spaniards and the natives.

In Tunis there is a *hebrah* (brotherhood) for the burial of the dead, which is divided into three sections, with rites differing from those of the Jews of Europe.

CHAPTER VI

Popular Literature of the Jews of Tunis

Tunis was the first city in Africa to develop a Judeo-Arabic literature. M. Vassel has made a study of this literature in the "Revue Tunisienne."

At one time nothing was read save works of a religious order and the Arabic writings of the Jewish authors of the Middle Ages. In 1862 there appeared at Leghorn the first secular book in Judeo-Arabic, entitled "Maaseh Sha'ashuim," containing popular stories.

Somewhat later there lived in Tunis a certain Hai Serfati, who kept a Jewish cabaret. In order to attract custom he used to amuse the guests with anecdotes and tales of the Jewish past. His success prompted him to set down his stories in writing, and he lent out the manuscripts.

In 1878 the Alliance Israélite opened its first school in Tunis. The year which was marked by this movement toward Europeanization also saw the launching of the first periodical in Judeo-Arabic, under the name of "El Amala el Tuniaia." As there was no Jewish press at Tunis, the journal was published in Leghorn, and was never able to appear on time. However, lay publications multiplied. In connection with this period of their development, the following amusing incident is related:

The books of the Haskalah, written in Hebrew, penetrated into Tunis, and there attained wide popularity. Among others, the biblical romance of Mapu, "Ahabat Zion," made such a success that a reprint was issued from Leghorn for the special benefit of the Jews of Tunis. These worthy people, not knowing the work was purely imaginative, regarded it as a serious narrative dating from biblical times, and they prefaced the first edition with a number of *haskamot*, or enthusiastic eulogies, by the rabbis of Tunis.

Ultimately a number of good Jewish printing presses were set up in Tunis. An enterprising and learned publisher, Simha Levy, began to issue literary works in Judeo-Arabic, thus creating a new branch of Jewish literature, the African Judeo-Arabic.

In 1884 there appeared "El Mubashir" (The Herald), which was followed by several other journals, published at Tunis and in other cities of northern Africa.

To-day there are several daily (the "Sebah" = Morning) and weekly periodicals in Judeo-Arabic, appearing in Tunis and in Tripoli, in Africa and in Morocco.

CHAPTER VII

Manners and Customs

M. Vassel describes as follows the Tunisian type of Jew:

"The Jews of Tunis are short, but well set up, their shoulders are rather high, their features regular and often delicate, their eyes beautiful and expressive. They have black hair and the skin of Southern Europeans; there are among them, however, blonds, and even albinos. Their women become excessively fat early in life. Gifted with a lively intelligence and excellent memories, and possessed of a remarkable faculty for adaptation, they have an extraordinary amount of *amour-propre*, which can be an excellent quality as well as a ridiculous one. But with very few exceptions they are extremely ignorant, and given to the most curious superstitions."

Estimates place the number of Jews between 65,000 and 150,000, with 43,000 for Tunis. The average of these two figures is probably correct.

Like the Mussulmans, the Jews of Tunis are the subjects of the Bey, but they are not liable to military service. In personal legal matters, that is, in matters affecting the family, like marriage, inheritance, guardianship, etc., they obey only the rulings of their own tribunals, or "Uzira." Child marriages have disappeared in Tunis. Polygamy, though permitted,

is not practised. In the more backward circles, the women do not go out alone, and do not make any purchases at the market.

The daily life of the Tunisian Jew is beset with countless superstitions, many of which date from the Phoenician and Christian epochs. Superstitions which have thus taken root in the mass of a people will only disappear with that people or with the advent of freedom of thought. Neither of these eventualities is likely to happen to the Jews of Tunis.

We will mention first a whole series of beliefs which have sprung from the cult of the fish, a cult the traces of whose ancient predominance may be found scattered across the whole Mediterranean. Thus, the Jewish fortune-tellers practise divination with fish. At Tunis, even at Tangiers, there are certain kinds of fish which it is forbidden to eat, on account of their use in divination. It is not in good taste to use the word "hut" (fish); its use is replaced by the phrase *Mta el hara* or *el bahra* (beings of the sea).

There are many kinds of *kameot*, talismans and amulets, which the Jewish child wears from the day of its birth. First comes the hand (or hand of Fatma) with five fingers, worked in metal with strange designs. This hand is found engraved in all the houses of the more backward Jews. It is worn as an amulet round the neck or on the heart. Children wear besides a horn of coral, a collar containing a small cypress to protect them from evil, a little bag of black cumin, incense, grains of carob, and silver plates with the words Shaddai, Siman Tob, etc.

On account of the hand, which is also named *hamsa* (five), they avoid uttering the number five, and say instead four-and-one, or several, etc.

As soon as a child has learned to speak, the mother makes it say: "There was a Jerbian (Jew of Jerba) at the marriage of thy mother." They believe that the Jews of Jerba possess special magical faculties. Some of the *Deggazas* (women soothsayers) and *Khaffers* (curers) do, as a matter of fact, come from Jerba. And the Cohanim of the Isle of Jerba are both feared and respected.

The *Deggaza* occupies an important place in the life of the Jewess. When a Jew falls ill, or when a young girl cannot find a husband, or even when somebody is given to drinking *bukha* (whiskey) excessively, the blame is laid on a *jnun* (evil spirit). The *Deggaza* is then called in, who casts spells with a coal or with a stone to drive out the evil spirit.

If a girl is "possessed" (ill), the sorceress bids her lay *herme* (rouge) on her hands and feet, paint her cheeks and her lips, put *kohul* on her eyebrows, put on a green coat and yellow *balush* (slippers), wrap a scarlet silk kerchief round her head, and then join her eyebrows with a single, thin, bright line.[60] In this festive garb the girl must appear before the evil spirits which she seeks to placate. A midnight repast is arranged, and the spirits are invited. To this ball, called *rebaybiyya*, men are not admitted. On the table are placed almonds, nuts and sweetmeats for the

[60] We may note with M. Vassel that this kind of toilette has been found in the tombs of ancient Carthage.

spirit-guests. Blind musicians are called in to play, for no man must see what takes place in the chamber.

We might mention, apropos of these dances, the musical instruments which are used among the Jews of Tunis and the neighboring villages. The Jews are practically the only native musicians, for music is forbidden to the Mussulmans by the Koran. The *mezuda zukra* is a kind of flute; the *bandura* is a drum of stretched skin; the *flarnet*, a kind of flageolet; the *derbuka*, an inverted, flat-bellied earthen vessel, with a long neck. At the bottom is stretched dog-fish skin, which is struck in cadence. Lastly, there is the kettledrum (*tabil*) and the reed flute.

While the melancholy music plays, the women, including the one who is sick, perform the *danse du ventre*, one after the other.

The women then address the sick dancer as follows: "Tell me who my representative is among the spirits?" She replies: "It is so and so," or, "It is the Prince of such and such a country." Thus it is in a state of ecstasy and frenzy that the sorceress prescribes the cures for the sick woman.

The Pythoness (the votary of the *Ob* of the Bible) is still to be found among the Jews of Tunis. She is called the *Deraia*. She burns perfumes on a chafing dish, and, holding her head over the fumes, works herself into a delirium and begins to prophesy.

There are certain nocturnal assemblies called *stambali*, where women make *rendezvous* with spirits, and dance with them. For music the following instruments are used at these assemblies: a drum of

black skin and a tambourine—an inverted clay plate, which is struck with a wooden spoon. Then a woman called *Hatat* traces lines in the sand and foretells the future.

The *Sachar* is a sorcerer who comes originally from Morocco. By the use of *kameot*, conjuring books and talismans (*talmes*), he learns all secret things. He cures, curses, and uncovers springs and secret treasures.

The people believe in ghosts. When a vision appears at night to any man, he must recite the Psalm *Vihi No'am*, and cry out: *Erje Likebrek* (Go back to your grave).

There is, in addition, a whole series of customs pertaining to women who have gone astray. Their number, however, is not great, considering the size of the Tunis community.

At the death of a woman who has led an evil life the site of the grave, which is on a plot apart from the others, is determined by the head of the *hebrah*, who throws a stick into the air, and marks the spot where it falls as the place for her interment.

The common test for death is to place a cigarette leaf on the lips of the sick person. If the paper fails to quiver, the women utter loud cries which bring in the neighbors, then tear their clothes, put ashes on their heads, strike themselves on the bosom, and then begin the praise of the dead one.

The hearse passes in silence through the streets, the women taking no part in the ceremony. After the burial a cover of white satin is stretched over the

tomb. The rabbi utters a prayer; then the parents, and after them the guests, throw money into the sheet.

If it chance that two brothers or two sisters die in the same place and their blood mingles, there issues from it according to their belief, a sort of caterpillar or grub—a spirit called *Ulayta*, which later changes into a donkey, or into fire, or into something else.

The neighbors of the dead, whose doors face his house, throw out pieces of leaven and water, in order that the "Angel of Death may wipe his knife thereon."

Palestinian earth, or even earth from the tomb of the sainted rabbi, the Paitan Fragi Chawich of Testur, is said to have the power of giving profounder rest to the dead.

The dead saints are held in the deepest veneration. On the thirty-third day of the Omer, or on the anniversary of the death of the saint, people visit the tomb for the *Ziara*, or pilgrimage festival.

CHAPTER VIII

Traditions Concerning the Aaronides

One of the peculiarities of native African Judaism is the tendency of Cohanim to group themselves as a sort of clan apart from the laity. The few Levites that there are come of Spanish or Italian stock, and are often not favorably regarded by the Cohanim. Among the Cohen families we meet with such names as Cohen Tanuji, Cohen Solal, Cohen Bulaika, Cohen Jerbi, Cohen Saqali, Cohen Chalaz, Cohen Hadad, etc.

What is the origin of this curious separatism which is peculiar to the Jews of Africa? As long as the Temple was standing the sons of Aaron formed a caste which had the monopoly of holy service. At the time of the exile they had their *bamot* in Palestine as well as throughout the diaspora. The rabbis who disputed the religious supremacy with them were not successful until after the destruction of the second Temple. But in Africa and in Arabia, where the settlement of Jews preceded the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. the Cahanina, two Aaronide tribes of Kuraiza and of Nadir in ancient Arabia), the Aaronides continued at the head of religious affairs for many centuries.

In Arabia particularly, where talmudic Judaism was slow in coming, the Cohens formed separate clans. These Cohens often presided over the services at some special temple or sanctuary. Wherever there

was a majority of primitive Jews and the cult of the orthodox rabbis was slow in taking root, these clans of Aaronides were the religious leaders.[61] Without doubt the Ghriba, or Solitary Sanctuary, is a memorial from far off days of a *bamah* which, with its ministering Cohanim, resembled the temples of Elephantine and of the Falashas, or the more striking sanctuary of Onias.

It is in these facts that we must look for the explanation of the problem of the Ghriba of Jerba. And yet this phenomenon of the Cohanim does not stand alone, for on the continent of Africa, the peculiarity of which it is to form and to encourage group and tribe formations, there are several other analogous cases.

I may mention briefly the case of the Tanuji, a priestly family scattered through all Africa, members of which were already known in Tunis in the fifteenth century. Tanuji is an ethnic name, meaning "those of Tangiers." As we cannot find any trace of Jews in this city between the twelfth century, when the Jews were exterminated by the Almohades, and the end of the fifteenth century, the period of the arrival of the Spanish exiles on the Moroccan coast, we must conclude that the Tanuji Aaronides must have left Tangiers in very remote times. (For details see our "Etudes sur l'histoire des Juifs au Maroc," I, III.)

The religion of Gabes, or the Jerid, in particular,

[61] The responsa of the Geonim contain several curious indications of the Cohanim of Africa even at the time of the predominance of the rabbis.

lays claim to being the birthplace of a priestly clan of Zadokite origin, that is, of the same origin as Onias, the founder of the Temple of Leontopolis. A vague talmudic allusion would make it appear that the House of Onias ministered up to the fourth century.[62] Two facts support this tradition. The region of the Jerid contains many Jews whose ancestors, at the time of the Arab invasion, formed a strong fighting force.[63] Again, the author of the Elegy, which recounts the miseries of the Almohad persecutions, speaks of Gabes as being of "noble" origin.[64]

It is quite true that the Aaronide element is missing among the Jews of the Tripolitan Jebel, which is one of the purest groups. Indeed, all the Cohanim at Tripoli, without a single exception, are immigrants. But this was not always the case. In the Jebel Iffren, the Jews of which trace back their origin to the time of the destruction of the Temple, I came upon a village opposite the Ghriba, and in the midst of Jewish settlements, where numbers of the inhabitants still bear the name Cohen. This village seems to have been an ancient settlement of Aaronides (like the one at Jerba), which at some time in its history was abandoned by its inhabitants.

It seems to me that this abandonment may have taken place about the tenth century, the epoch when the rabbinic power in Africa was beginning to replace

[62] Bab. Talmud, Megillah, 10a.

[63] M. Fleury, after Ibn Cha'aban.

[64] Cazes in his article: "Antiquités Juives en Tripolitaine," Rev. des Etudes Juives, XX, 79.

that of the priests. The signs of this struggle between the rabbis and the religious caste may be traced everywhere to a more or less marked degree—even in the *teshubot* (responsa) of the Geonim of Babylonia. At Jerba the rabbinic power not only replaced, but actually came to rule, the priesthood.

In the Jebel Iffren where, with the exception of the above-mentioned village, every trace of the Cohanim has disappeared, the word *Cohen* still remains in an ancient dialect, of which we shall speak in more detail later on. And it is curious to note the meaning which has been given to this word, which was at one time so sacred in Israel: it has the same meaning as the word שחד, bribery. The very history of this word is in itself a recital of the decadence of the Jews of these parts.

The struggle between the Cohanim and the *vulgus*, which has nearly everywhere disappeared, is still going on in more than one corner of Africa, though its bitterness has been mitigated. In the end the tribes of Cohanim came to model themselves very closely on the Mussulman tribes of the Shurefas, the decendants of Mohammed.

At Debdu, near Taza, the center of the Riata who have embraced Judaism, where there is still a necropolis like the one at Gamart, exists the clan of the Saqali Aaronides. These Cohanim, proud of their sanctuary, will permit no ordinary Israelite to profane the temple by his presence. On the other hand, they resent fiercely the presence of a Levite within the precincts of the sacred city.

If to these instances we add the Cahena (a word which in Phoenician means "the Priestess" and in vulgar Hebrew, "daughter of a Cohen"), who was the queen of the great Jewish warrior nation of the Jerua, we shall perhaps be venturing on a very daring theme, but one which is emerging clearly from the mass of facts which we have accumulated, namely, that at the time of the Arab invasion there were in Africa numbers of Jewish sanctuaries, kept up by clans of priests of Aaronide origin, who dominated the primitive Jews and even the Berbers themselves.

For the prototype of this cult we must look to the Temple of Onias in Egypt. Onias, who was of Zadokite origin, succeeded in founding a rival temple in Egypt, put himself at the head of the Jewish military colonies in the country, and had himself invested with the title of *Arabarch*—that is, Prince of the Nomads of the desert and of the Red Sea. This title he secured for his descendants, who inherited from him the title of Commander-in-Chief, and the supremacy over the district of the Onion. (Cf. Josephus, Antiquities, XIII, 3.)

It is well known that similar military colonies have always existed in Libya. Would it not be logical to assume, as several African writers have done, that after the wars of the revolt against Rome (115-118) the Jewish refugees of Cyrenaica, guided by the descendants of Onias, and even by other priestly families, penetrated with the Ethiopian Berbers into the vast mountain districts of Africa? This original theory has, indeed, been advanced, but it has been

impossible to find scientific support for it. But the frequency of monuments which refer to pre-Islamite epochs, the *necropoles* cut in the rocks, the sanctuaries, or *Ghriba*, the remnants of Jewish nomad tribes, and, last of all, the clans of Aaronides—do not all these throw a new light on the historic problem which the writings of Ibn Khaldun have raised and which presents its most striking episode in the epic of the mysterious Cahena?

PART IV

THE JEWS IN ALGERIA

CHAPTER I

IN THE COUNTRY OF THE CAHENA

NOMADIC JEWS: THE BAHUZIM

The center of the Maghreb (French Africa), now known as Algeria, covers the territories of ancient Numidia and of Caesarean Mauretania. This vast and beautiful region has never been properly organized as a whole; whenever the central government weakened, the country became a prey to the turbulent and warlike tribes, who make their home on the borders of the great desert or in the mountains of Kybele, of Aures and of Oran. Except for the towns on the littoral—where there have been found documents relating to the existence of Jewish communities—such as Cherchel (Caesarea), Tebessa, Lambessa (near the Aures), and in a few known cities, like Constantine and Tlemçen, there are no fixed centers of population. The Berber peoples—which later mingled with the Arabs—led primitive lives, either as mountain robbers or as nomads given to *razzia* (pillage). The Jews made their appearance among these aboriginal tribes with the formation of the first sedentary communities, like those of Tlemçen and Tahert in the west, the only two towns where there are any Jewish documents relating to the tenth century.

The largest portion of the Jewish population lived in tribes, such as the tribe of Mediuna, which occupied Oran—a country where there still circulate legends pertaining to the wars of Joshua the son of Nun, and the tribe of the Jerua in the Aures, from which sprang the celebrated Cahena. There are Jewish traditions also in the south, where a group of oases forms the *Ksur* of the Sahara. Entire tribes, like the Hanancha and the Smul, and various ethnic groups, claim to be descended from the Jews of Arabia, the famous Yehud Chaibar (the Beni Rechab of Jewish tradition), with whom Mohammed carried on such a bitter struggle.

Thus far documentary evidence as to the importance of the rôle which the Jews once played in these parts is lacking. The documents which have been pieced together from time to time lack cohesion and have not been given a critical examination, but now that more and more interest is being attached to the study of folk-lore and ethnography, we may hope for new light on the destinies of the remnants of Israel which were lost in these regions of the Dark Continent.

To the written evidence of certain authors in regard to the part played by the Jews in Africa in past centuries may now be added the proofs offered by certain surviving ethnic characteristics, the persistence of Jewish nomad groups in regions stretching as far as Aures, the existence of distinct Jewish groups in the *Ksur* of the Sahara—the peoples among whom were formed the legends concerning Joshua the son of Nun—

and various tribes of Jewish origin, living commentaries on the traditions of the past.

There are troglodyte Jews in the Tripolitan Jebel and nomadic Jews in the east Algerian Highlands. These Yehud-el-Arab, or "Bedouin Jews," have their *duars* in several districts, and lead the life of our ancestor Abraham. They may be met with in the Jerid, in the Derid, in the Kef, in the Algerian districts between Suq-el-Ahras and Tebessa (a city which legend connects with Joab), and in the oases of the south. I have encountered nearly everywhere former nomads who have settled in the towns. The Jewish town-dwellers call them *Bahuzim*—those that come from without. They are considered to be different from the mass of the Jewish people, and are somewhat looked down upon, being classed with the Berbers.

I decided to make a personal visit to a duar, or nomad camp, in order to study this people at first hand. To this end I broke my journey several times while travelling from Tunis to Constantine. I disembarked at Jedeida, not far from the capital. Jedeida is the farm which has been founded by the Alliance Israélite. This society sought to make agriculturists of the Jews of Tunis as far as possible, and for this purpose founded this farm on the model of the agricultural school at Mikve Israel in Palestine. I examined the farm and became acquainted with several former pupils who have established themselves in the locality, but I was convinced that despite the goodwill of the founders and directors it is not likely that the school will achieve any lasting results, for

there is not a single spark of idealism among the pupils, and they are soon discouraged.

Close to the Algerian frontier the traveller enters into a mountainous country, which comes as a relief after the unbroken monotony of the plains and deserts of Tunis. This is the district of Kef. Before the French occupation the mountaineers and nomads used to meet here to organize their raids with the object of *razzia* (pillage) on the villages and settlements. On market days the Arabs used to gather to do business with the Jewish merchants, jewellers and locksmiths of the north. There are in this district several places which bear the name of the day when the market was held there. Suq-el-Arba, "Wednesday market," has become, thanks to the French occupation, quite a modern little town. Several families from Tunis and Sus, together with a number of nomads, have migrated to Suq-el-Arba, and to-day the town contains about a hundred Jewish families, who have a communal head and a rabbi of their own, a native of Palestine.

The gradual settling down of the nomads goes on steadily. I have myself seen, on the outskirts of towns, reed huts which are inhabited by former nomads. Nomad by birth and by temperament, the Bahuzi cannot make up his mind to break at one stroke with his former life. Before he settles down permanently he generally establishes himself temporarily near a town, and changes his residence with every change in the wind. And very often a bedouin, who has made several attempts to become a city

dweller, becomes homesick for his old life of freedom and movement and returns to the desert which he has abandoned. Those of them who finally succeed in settling down for good are very intelligent; their reputation for honesty in matters of business is not particularly good, but they are possessed of a courage and dignity unknown to the Jews of the cities. Their children, as I have myself been able to ascertain, are very clever, and achieve better results at school than even the French children or the children of Jews of Spanish origin.

European life is taking hold wherever the French are establishing administrative centers. With European life come European vices; the vices before anything else. Without knowing what the French are, our coreligionists seek to imitate the French. The following little incident will illustrate my meaning. During Sukkot the President of the community invited me to his house. I found him dressed in European fashion, but ignorant of a European language or of Hebrew, which is no better known in these parts where all education is extremely primitive. We passed into the *Sukkah*, which was prettily decorated. The master of the house, the family and the guests seated themselves at the table, and we proceeded to *Kiddush*. My astonishment may well be imagined when, at the service, they used absinthe instead of wine. This drink is very popular among the Jews of the place, even the young folk. I learned that it was in my honor, as a Frenchman, that absinthe had been

served, and they were astounded to learn that I never make use of the drink.

A night's travelling in a diligence across the mountains of Kef brought me to the city of Kef, which dominates the country. There are about a hundred and fifty Jewish families in the town, of whom a number are of nomad origin. The community is a young one. The Ghriba, or lonely synagogue, and the cemetery were once the meeting place of the nomads; they came thither from the whole district of Kef to worship and to bury their dead. To-day the Bahuzim of the Sers come from a distance of forty kilometers to bury their dead there. The Jewish cemetery of Kef is peculiar in one respect: the country is very rich in Roman ruins and memorials, so the Bahuzim, who can neither read nor write, have placed stones bearing Latin inscriptions on the tombs of their dead. The cemetery now looks like a museum of Pagan inscriptions. The poor people did not know that it was a profanation to place Pagan inscriptions and designs over the tombs of their dead.

I was now given the opportunity to study the Bahuzim in their native element. A local railway leads from Kef to the vast valley of the Sers, where there are to-day two nomad *duars*. I arrived there on the eve of Sukkot. A native Jew of Kef, one of the former pupils of the agricultural school of Jedeida, acted as my guide, and we drew near to a little group of five tents, which formed the *duar* of the Sers. Pitched in this vast, fertile valley, these tents recall the ordinary Bedouin camps of the Orient. The nomads recognized

my companion at a distance, for it was he who gave them work to do, and who bought their harvests when these were gathered in. They came to meet us and led us into one of the tents. An old man, perhaps eighty years of age, still energetic and vigorous, gave us a hearty welcome. When he learned the object of my visit, he hastened to show me every courtesy. The whole camp, men, women and children, twenty-eight in all, turned out to see me, and seemed as interested in me as I was in them. Their type differs little from that of the Jews of southern Tunis and of Msellata. Brown skinned, more alert than the city dwellers, they approximate to the Bedouin type; in essentials they belong to the type of Jew found in Msellata. The women seem weary, and they are not as pretty as the women of the cities, but they are whiter than the women of their neighbors, the Mussulman nomads.

The two chiefs, of whom one was the old Yussuf, and the other, strangely enough, his sister-in-law, a native of Suq-el-Ahras, took a leading part in the conversation. They explained that they called themselves by the name "Yehud-el-Ahras," and that their ancestors had always been nomads. The *duar* consisted of a single family, which was the offspring of a marriage between a member of the *duar* of Suq-el-Ahras and a member of the *duar* of Jerid. Already one family had left them to form the nucleus of a future *duar*. Another family was living in the city. I asked them when and where this process began, but they knew nothing about it. In their traditions occur the names of Saadi and Bagai; Bagai happens

to be the name of the capital of the Cahena, the ancient Jewish queen of Africa. The songs that they sing show that they look on the Berbers as their enemies.

"They are on good terms with the Arab *duars* of the neighborhood ('Kif hui,' 'like brothers')," said Yussuf. The old Yussuf himself was an extraordinarily interesting fellow. In his younger years he had travelled among all the Ksur of the Sahara; and he said that everywhere he had found Israelites of his own type.

Their knowledge of Judaism is an almost negligible quantity. In the Jewish *duars* they swear by the name of Sidna Musa (Lord Moses), as among the Arabs they swear by the name of Sidna Mohammed. Of the exploits of Joshua ben Nun they have heard next to nothing. They do no work on Saturday. The old people are often in the habit of passing Yom Kippur in the city. They carry their dead as far as Kef for burial, and at Kef they ascertain the exact dates of the principal festivals. Not one of them knows how to read the prayers, and the old chief is the only one who knows most of the more important prayers by heart. To impress me with his extreme wisdom old Yussuf unrolled before me the ample page of his knowledge. With triumphant gestures he recited the *kiddush*, the *berakot* and the *shema'*. I had heard as much as I wanted, but I perceived that the old head of the family was having a good time showing off before the assembly. To stop the torrent of learning I said to him: "I thank you, heartily. I see that you are, in truth, a great sage. Sidi Abraham himself was hardly

more wise." A whisper of tickled vanity went through the curious assembly.

I made closer inquiries into the nature and the constitution of the *duar*. One family bore the name of Alush, another that of Shabbat. The first names of individuals are Jewish or Arab. All these people are agriculturists, but in between seasons they are also jewellers, weavers and smiths. My companion, the corn merchant, who provides work for this group, told me they were excellent tillers of the soil.

The old Yussuf reminded us that in honor of the festival we would have to partake of a meal with him. He led us into a little *sukkah* made entirely of branches, but conforming very little with the regulations laid down in the Talmud. Moreover, the poetic little hut was so low roofed that it was necessary to maintain a stooping posture if one wanted to stand on one's feet. I was able to appreciate at last the interminable discussions in the Talmud concerning "the *sukkah* which is not more than ten *tefahim* in height."

Yussuf recited the *kiddush*, and we were served with roast meat and pungent *cus-cus*. It was a delightful sensation to sit down with these people in this "tent of Abraham."

My hosts told me that they would be perfectly happy were it not for two things. The first was that they had been deprived of their French citizenship, to which they were entitled as natives of Algeria; the second was the periodic outbreak of marsh diseases.

How many of them were there in the country? They were unable to tell me. In any case they were

a strong enough minority to be possessed of a distinct race consciousness as Bahuzim.

I took a most friendly farewell of these children of Nature. Not only did they meet with a dignified refusal my offer of a present; they even showed themselves extremely sensible of the new interest which I had brought into their lives. "We have never seen a Jew like you!" one young man told me ecstatically. And as for me, I had never thought in the twentieth century to see the brothers of Abraham the nomad in the flesh.

Later I pursued my inquiries further. At Constantine I met with a number of Bahuzim who had settled in the city as jewellers. A few of them still treasured hazy traditions concerning the Cahena. At Gabes, at Ain Beida and at Khenchella there are large numbers of nomads who have settled down. Some of them have been converted to Islamism. A few nomads here and there still observe the tribal divisions. There are Jewish groups among the Smul and the Zaruria, but they are of very little importance. In the extreme south there are also a few nomads belonging to distinct tribes. The increasing frequency of contact between the Jews who have settled in the new French cities and the nomads is leading to a gradual assimilation of the latter. The *duras* are slowly adopting the manners and the customs of the city dwellers.

The following curious incident is very much apropos of this development: Beyond the Sers near the Burz Zibirin there is a large Jewish *duar* of some twenty tents. Some years ago a certain Jew named

Abraham, a former cave-dweller of the Gharian, who called himself a *shohet* and who had travelled over the whole of the south country, came to this *duar*. The nomads received the man with the greatest joy, and adopted him as their rabbi. Since then he instructs their children in reading and writing and in the Jewish ritual. A cave-dweller teaching tent-dwellers! Such a phenomenon is to be found only in Africa.

CHAPTER II

CONSTANTINE AND AURES

The city of Constantine is called "the eagle's nest," and nothing could be more wildly picturesque or imposing than this rock—the Cirta of the Kings of Numidia—a kind of truncated cone fifteen hundred meters long and nine hundred meters wide. On two sides it is separated from the surrounding country by a deep granite-walled cañon, twenty-five to fifty meters in width, at the bottom of which, at a depth of a hundred and seventy meters, the mad torrent of the Rumel dashes furiously towards the sea. The city is a natural fortress—one of the oldest in the world. With its fifty thousand inhabitants, of whom 20,000 are Europeans and 10,000 are Jews, Constantine has become French, and yet has remained Arab and Jewish. The history of the Jewish community goes back to earliest times. Justinian mentions it in an edict of the year 535. In ancient days it served as a station for Jewish merchants trading between Carthage and Numidia. It was the capital of the shepherd Jews, and one of the residences of the Cahena. The present Jews of the city are all natives, and little is known of their past, for the Spanish exiles have hardly penetrated into the community. The Hara is still a tangle of close and narrow streets, the houses are all jumbled together, with low doors and dark passages

leading into the cellars, where the inhabitants used to hide in the days when massacres still took place. Their names and their customs are thoroughly African. They are the congeners of the Bahuzim. The city still continues to receive numbers of pastoral Jews who settle there as jewellers and smiths. Some of them still recount warlike tales of the distant desert. As in Tripoli, there are neither Cohanim nor Leviim among the native Jews.

In the year 1391 two Spanish rabbis established themselves in Constantine: rabbi Joseph ben Memran and rabbi Mimun Nadgar. Their rabbinic activities left no lasting impression, unless it be in the ritual, which is Sephardic.

Very conservative and extremely ignorant in religious matters, the Jews of Constantine have retained one characteristic: all of them are either merchants or artisans. The city is little industrialized, but already there are factories with young men and women working in them. The young girls, and even some of the women, become servants in the European houses. I have been told that there are more than two thousand Jewish domestic servants who bring about a million francs a year into the Hara. This has had some influence on the domestic life of the Jews, but the purity of their customs has remained unchanged. The women are beautiful, graceful and *svelte*, like all the Jewesses of the interior. Some fifteen years ago, thanks to the efforts of certain politicians, Constantine became a hot-bed of anti-Semitism; the movement was purely artificial, and its

sources were to be found in certain electoral agitations. Since then these agitations have died down.

Backward and cautious in their way of life, the Jews of Constantine, who enjoy all the rights of French citizenship, take no part in the political or social life of the city.

Aures is a large, fertile mountain plateau, temperate in climate, stretching from Biskra to the Sahara. The outposts of the desert tribes are on its borders, and possession of the Aures used to mean domination over the rest of the country. Every conqueror sought to possess himself of Bagaia, the ancient Berber and Roman city, now in ruins, which was the first station of the Aures.

This picturesque country, dominated by the Shellia Alp, which the cedars planted by the Phoenicians have made into a second Lebanon, played an important part in the history of unknown Jewish Africa. Here, before the Arab invasion, were pitched the tents of the Jerua, the powerful Jewish tribe from whom arose the illustrious Cahena.

Who and what was this tribe which played such a capital rôle in the history of Africa? From the Bahuzim of to-day we may form some idea of the nature of the great Jewish tribes which existed here before Islam decimated them and scattered their remnants afar. They were half pastoral and half industrial, and they concerned themselves little with religious matters. Coming to Africa before the destruction of the Temple—perhaps transported thither by the Phoenicians—they knew nothing of the

Talmud. As I have shown elsewhere, their primitive Judaism was dominated by families of priests. The Cahena, their queen, was herself a priestess and the daughter of a Cohen. It is the history of this queen, which has never been treated in any Jewish work, that I am about to relate, for while travelling in her country I was able to ascertain the great rôle which she played. We are dealing now not with a legendary, but with a real, historic character. Her history has been related by the Arab writers Ibn Khaldun, En Novairi,[65] etc.

The Jerua, a warrior tribe which emigrated after the Cyrenaica massacres of 115-118, generally pitched their tents on the Jebel Meunchar, a long hill stretching to the north of Khenchella and dominating the vast plain of the Haractas, which the Wed Nini splits in two. Their territory, which extended as far as the Jebel where a Jewish cemetery may still be seen, had its capital at Bagaia.

By the side of the Roman and Berber ruins of this city I found a necropolis resembling that of Gamart; at the two extremities of the country of the Jerua I found two other cemeteries.

Toward the fifth century, profiting by the help which they had given the Vandals, the Jerua gained a firm hold on the country of Aures. The historian Ibn Khaldun tells us that by their military strength, their knowledge of the arts of peace and their nobility "the Jerua dominated all the Berbers of the middle country, supplying them with royal dynasties."

[65] See French translation by Slane.

There is still in existence a list of the kings of the Jerua before the days of the Vandals, which reads as follows: Diah (Dahia or Dania), called the Cahena, daughter of Tabet, son of Nicin, son of Baur, son of Mizkeri, son of Afred, son of Uzil, son of Gera. From the time of the Arab invasion the Cahena, priestess and queen, reigned in the Aures and, like Deborah, judged the Berbers. Like all great historic personages, this mighty woman has found a place in legend; but at the back of all these legends there is actual historic fact.[66]

After the defeat of Koceila, the King of the Aures, who was slain by the Arab invaders, the Cahena placed herself at the head of the Berbers and began her splendid work. Knowing well that internal dissension was the source of the weakness of the Berbers, she began by putting an end to the rivalries of tribes and to their internecine struggles. She also extended her authority over a great number of other peoples, the Greeks of Africa for instance.

"It is now time," says M. Mercier, the historian of Northern Africa, "to give this heroine her place in history side by side with the women who by their courage and patriotism have won distinguished names for themselves."

The legends of the Berbers, who have adopted the Cahena, the African Joan of Arc, as their national heroine, have surrounded her youth with countless marvels. Being a woman of extraordinary beauty, she was sought in marriage by the chiefs of many

[66] See Fournel, "Les Berbères."

powerful tribes. She rejected the offers of one young man, hating his cruel and debauched character. His father, the head of the tribe, was dead, and it was this rejected suitor who was called upon to succeed him. He turned out to be a tyrant, and in his oppression of the people even went so far as to exact from every girl the "seignorial rights" of the Middle Ages. The Cahena formed a plan to free her people from this monstrous tyranny. She informed him that she was ready to give herself to him in marriage, and on the day of the nuptials she came to him. When he was about to receive her she, like a new Judith, plunged a dagger into his breast. The liberatress was immediately proclaimed queen of the tribe.

But she is best known to Arab historians in her rôle as queen. After the death of Koceila she led the Berbers against Hassan, the conquering Mussulman. This general of the Calif, at the head of an army of 40,000 Mussulmans, had taken Carthage from the Greeks. Then he marched against the Berbers of Aures, who were under the rule of the Cahena. Having asked what unconquered power there yet remained in *Ifriqia*, he was told that the greatness of the Cahena was such that if he once vanquished her, he would be the undisputed master of the Maghreb.

Hearing of this menace, the Cahena came down from the mountains at the head of a great army composed of Berbers and Christians and, forestalling the Arab general, marched on Bagaia, expelled the Romans and destroyed the city, in order that the Arabs might not fortify it. The Arab army encamped

near the Wed Nini. The queen then advanced on the Arabs, but the hour was late and Hassan would not accept the gage of battle. Both armies passed the night in the saddle. With the break of day they hurled themselves upon one another. The issue was bitterly contested, but, inspired by the heroism of their queen, the Berbers gained a mighty victory. Hassan and the Mussulmans, completely routed, were pursued as far as the territory of Gabes. The remainder of the army of the Calif fled into the solitudes of the Great Syrte.

The Cahena entered Carthage, took possession of the city, and made it her provisional headquarters. Thus the ancient Phoenician capital rose again after its fall, and became the residence of a queen of Hebrew origin. It seemed as though vengeance was about to be visited on Rome.

The progress of the Cahena across Africa was a series of triumphs. City after city laid tribute at her feet; several Christian bishops came in great pomp to offer her their congratulations. At Bulla Regia the inhabitants strewed her path with flowers. By one of those ironies which are only too common in Jewish history, the Jews, who looked upon the Arabs as their liberators from Byzantine rule, were the only ones who did not seem to share in the general rejoicing and enthusiasm. A popular Jewish poem, which has been rediscovered by M. Cazes, curses the Cahena, and compares her with Nebuchadnezzar and Hadrian.

For five years there was peace in Africa. The country began to prosper. Then the Arabs returned

with sixty thousand soldiers. Besides this large army they possessed a number of fortresses which they had constructed. The Africans implored help from Constantinople, but the cowardly Greeks abandoned them to their fate. The Cahena assembled her allied forces, and exhorted them as follows: "Count on no help outside the help of the God who has armed me. An evil spirit possesses the Gentiles who rule at Byzantium. The forces of darkness are bringing the Barbarians across the desert, that they may here slake their thirst for murder and for pillage. But death is more welcome than submission and slavery." The Christians promised their help, but, jealous of the success of the Cahena, they made advances to the Mussulmans, with the purpose of concluding with them a shameful peace.

The treachery of the Christians filled the Cahena with fury. At the risk of disaffecting the town-dwelling Jews, she decided on extreme measures. She gathered the Berbers together and roused them to action, saying: "The earth will provide us with our necessities; there is enough in her bosom to nourish us and our flocks. The Arabs, the brigands who have come from the land of the rising sun, are looking for cities to loot: they thirst for gold and silver, for the spoil of houses and palaces. Take your swords and your torches. Cut down trees; level the buildings with the ground, that the enemy may find neither tree nor shelter nor provisions in his passage. For the faith of your ancestors, for the love of your God!" And thus, for the welfare of the fatherland, Africa was

devastated. The cities were sacked, the fields and the gardens ruined, the trees cut down, the waters turned from their courses. Everything which might tempt the Arabs to a second invasion was removed.

Yet, in laying her empire waste systematically, the Cahena only increased the number of malcontents; the Jews and Christians of the cities, deprived of their homes, never forgave her. The desertions from her cause increased steadily. More than that, the extreme measures she had taken failed to turn aside the greed of the Arabs.

In 703 the Arab general, Hassan, again invaded the Maghreb. He had kept in close touch with Khalid Ibn Yezzid el Kaisi, a prisoner in the camp of the Cahena. At the time of her victory at Wed Nini the Cahena had taken as prisoners eighty of the noble companions of Hassan; she had released them all, with the exception of Khalid, who was very young. "I have never seen a man more beautiful and more brave than thou," she said to him. "I would give thee suck (this was the sign of adoption among the Berbers) that thou mightest become the brother of my sons."

But Khalid had in mind only the interests of his religion; he was ready and eager to betray his benefactress. After the capture of Gabes by Hassan he was ungrateful enough to desert the cause of the queen and to lead the Arab forces against her.

The desertions of the Berbers crowned the misfortune of the unhappy queen. The two armies met at El Jem, the ancient Thysdrus, the Roman amphi-

theatre which still bears the name of the Fort of the Cahena. Near this monument of the greatness of Rome the fate of Africa was decided. The carnage was such, says Ibn Novairi, that the Mussulmans believed they would fall to a man; but, with the help of God, they succeeded in defeating the Berbers and, after enormous losses, they put them to flight.

The Cahena fled toward the Bir or Kasr el Cahena in the Aures. She was advised to seek refuge in Mauretania, but, just before she died, she gathered her sons together and declared: "She who has commanded the Rum (Christians), the Berbers and the Arabs can die only as a queen."

She fell gloriously, sword in hand. This was in the year 704. Hassan was barbarous enough to decapitate her, and he sent her head to the Calif of Bagdad, Abd-el-Malik.

Thus ends the epic of the Cahena—of this African Deborah, the national heroine of a branch of Israel which sought for centuries to recreate in Africa a Jewish homeland based on political power and dominated by primitive Judaism.

After the death of the Cahena the Arab general massacred fifty thousand of the inhabitants of the Aures who refused to be converted to Islam. The two sons of the Cahena, like the mass of the people, embraced the faith of the conqueror, and then, at the head of some twelve thousand warriors of the Jerua, took part in the conquest of Spain.

The population of the Aures has changed little since

those days. The Arabs have never been able to occupy properly this mighty mountain district.

Jewish and Christian manners and festivals may still be observed among the Arabized Berbers of the Aures. There are ancient Jewish cemeteries in the country. One fact is particularly interesting: certain important fragments of the tribe of the Jerua clung to their Judaism throughout the whole of the Middle Ages.

As late as the seventeenth century Jewish warrior tribes occupied several parts of the Aures, and exacted toll from the Mussulmans.[67] But the days of their glory were forever gone; in the nineteenth century the advance of civilization forced some of them to settle in the towns, while the majority of them became converts to Islam.

Travelling through these parts of historic but almost completely unknown Jewish Africa, beginning at Ain Beida and at Khenchella, I reflected on the strange destinies of our people; what brute force, the sword, and political domination have failed to do, has been done by ignorance of Judaism and desertion of the Law.

Between the Jerid and the Ksur of the Sahara they still wander about, these last representatives of the nomads, these brothers of "Abraham the Hebrew." Agriculturists, shepherds and artisans, they live at peace with their Arab neighbors, who are as ignorant and as little concerned with things religious as they. In the Aures they still show the traveller several

[67] Colonel Lartigue, "Monographie sur l'Aures."

cemeteries dating from the Middle Ages. Close to Biskra they still have a Ghriba, or Solitary Synagogue, which to-day serves as the meeting-place of the Hanancha, a tribe whose scattered remnants still pitch their tents in the north of the Sahara.

But their fate still pursues them; the invasion of the Rumi has forced the natives, in their hatred of the foreigner, to unite in common cause: the Berbers of the Aures, who yesterday cared little for religious matters, orthodox or heretical, have allowed themselves to fall under the influence of the Marabuts, or Arab saints. A movement toward Islam, which neither the authorities nor the Jews of Paris were able to forestall, marked the second half of the nineteenth century. The Israelites were the first to suffer. These primitive people, cut off from any other Judaism, living only in their immemorial traditions, saw themselves touched in that which constituted their very existence: the indifference of their neighbors as to what form of religion they professed. Racial standards were giving way to those of religion. The new régime meant the further scattering of the tribes. Between Aures and Constantine, a large fragment of the Smul—some fifty tents in all—was betrayed by its Sheik and forced, under most dramatic circumstances, to embrace Islam. The Beni Ismael, near Tebessa, and many others found themselves in the same straits. Their neighbors still designated them by the name of Yehudi. But the rest of the Jewish world, which should have interfered, failed to arrest the disappearance of a historic race

which, by its courage, its industry and its diligence in cultivating the soil had merited a better fate. The Christian authorities, on the other hand, failed to understand what they would have gained by saving to Judaism this people of the desert.

CHAPTER III

THE JEWS OF ALGERIA

Though we have left for another volume, which has not yet reached completion, the treatment of the history of African Judaism from earliest times till the present, and though the Jewish communities of Algeria and of certain parts of Morocco have already been described by several writers, we think it would be useful to remind the reader of the place held by these communities in Mediterranean Judaism.

We have already seen that during the Middle Ages there were few Jewish communities in Algeria, and that only two cities (Tlemçen and Tahert) are known in the history of rabbinic Judaism. For many centuries the Jews of Algeria stagnated in profound ignorance, and there is no recorded history of them beyond that contained in their legends and traditions. It was only with the arrival of the rabbis who sought refuge from the persecutions in Spain and Majorca, in 1391, that Algeria began to win for herself a place in the history of Judaism. The petty Mussulman potentates of the Algerian cities, whose energies were divided between commerce and piracy, received these refugees graciously. Among the latter there were several great rabbinic authorities who afterwards founded influential schools. Here is the list of the rabbinic sages who settled in Algeria in 1391:

In Algiers: rabbi Isaac ben Sheshet (Ribash) and rabbi Simon ben Zemah Duran (Rashbaz).

In Bougie: rabbi Benjamin Amar; in Constantine, rabbi Joseph ben Menir and rabbi Mimun Najar; in Honein, rabbi Moses Gabei; in Medea, rabbi Saadia Dormon; at Tlemçen, rabbi Abraham ben Hakun, rabbi Amram Ephrati, and rabbi Hadra, who is buried at Beni Snup; then later rabbi Ephraim Al Anquava.

The history of Judaism in the city of Algiers also begins in 1391, with the arrival of rabbi Isaac ben Sheshet, named the Ribash (ריב"ש) or, more shortly, the "Rab." At that time the Jewish community of Algiers was Arab speaking and very backward; it went by the name of בעלי המצנפת (Wearers of the Turban), as distinguished from the exiles of Spain and Majorca, who were called בעלי הכבוס (Wearers of the "Cap," the Hood or Bereta). The Ribash began a campaign against the ignorance and superstition of the native Jews, who were so far sunk in indifference that they even carried their disputes to Mussulman judges. He did much in Algiers and elsewhere to inculcate in his coreligionists some of the customs of the Spanish Jews and, above all, to encourage them in the study of the Law. Still, all his efforts did not succeed in dispelling either the superstitions which are the peculiar possession of the natives, or their worship of the dead, this dominating African cult.

Ironically enough he himself became, after his death in 1408, the Saint, the Rab, the guardian spirit of Algiers! The sick and the unfortunate of every faith came to pray at his tomb, over which the rich

and modern community of to-day has reared a magnificent mausoleum.

To-day the city of Algiers—one of the most beautiful cities in the world—has a Jewish population of some twelve thousand. The community is very well organized, and has taken every advantage of the progress of civilization. They are for the most part prosperous and well educated, and have no reason to envy the Jews of the most liberal countries of the Occident. Still, the young people are very little given to Jewish studies and, had it not been for the outburst of anti-Semitism in 1900, they would by this time, no doubt, have completely forgotten that they are Jews.

The anti-Semitic movement which was started and sustained by political motives, and which found special scope among the Catholic followers of Drumont and Max Régis, helped on by the jealousy of the Arabs, has, under an enlightened government, disappeared as if by magic.

The Alliance Israélite perceived at last the havoc which the granting of full French rights was working among the masses, who were utterly ignorant of Judaism and of its moral teachings, and hastened to institute a series of religious and vocational courses in several of the cities of Algeria. This was something, but it was far from sufficient. The Jews of Algeria still have none of the interests of other modern Jewries.

The other large city of Algeria is Oran—a busy port. There are between 12,000 and 14,000 Jews in

Oran. Like those of Algiers, they are a mixture of natives and Spanish immigrants. A certain number of them came from Morocco and the Sahara, and to these natives of the desert Oran probably owes in part the retention of its Jewish characteristics. A railway runs from Morocco to the Sahara, and links these with the oasis of Figig and with Beshar. The Jewish population of Oran is very active, industrious and enterprising, as is particularly evident in the new towns of Morocco. The chief faults of these Jews are their natural fondness of violence and their general uncouthness and lack of manners.

The young people, proud of their French citizenship, have given ample proof of their equal pride of race. At the time of the events of Man Reyes, in 1900, the Jews of Oran organized a courageous resistance to the attacks on the Mellah (the Jewish quarter). Anti-Semites know by now that it is a rather ticklish matter to get into a dispute with a Jew of Oran. And as civic courage always goes hand in hand with a sense of dignity, the young Jewish Zouaves of Oran form one of France's bravest contingents of soldiers. The distinctions won by the Algerian Jews in this war are numerous and remarkable. All things go to prove that Algerian Judaism, which yesterday was so backward and uninspiring, can, with a little more education and with a little more self-consciousness, win itself an honorable place in the Jewish world.

Oran, like Algiers, has its Rab or Saint, its own ritual, and its own traditions. It has had its great rabbis and its own religious traditions. The ritual

of the מחזור והראן has been printed, and it offers many interesting peculiarities. The Community, which has been reconstructed in 1391 and in 1492 by the Spanish refugees, suffered much from the frequent Spanish occupations of the city.

Situated in eastern Algeria, in a very fertile mountainous country, Tlemçen is, from the Jewish point of view, one of the most interesting cities of the country. It is a center of great Jewish traditions; around Tlemçen may be found in their completest form the traditions concerning Joshua ben Nun in Africa and the Jewish warrior tribes.

The Jewish community of Tlemçen is one of the most ancient in the region. In the tenth century the rabbis of Tlemçen were looked upon by the Geonim of Mesopotamia as great rabbinic authorities.[68] In the twelfth century Ibn Ezra deplored its destruction by the Almohades in these words: "What has become of the glory of the community of Tlemçen, and of her majesty which is departed?"

In the thirteenth century Jews were to be found at Agadir, near Tlemçen. It is related that in 1294 Yussuf the Merinide, the conqueror of Tlemçen, built the Castle of Monsur. One of the towers was built by a Jewish mason, but when it was finished the Sultan forbade the Jew to come down from the top of the mosque. The Jew then made himself a pair of wooden wings, leaped from the tower and fell to earth, some kilometers away, on a crag which is still called "The Crag of the Jew."

[68] See Harkavy, "The Responsa of the Geonim."

In 1391, thanks to the efforts of rabbi Ephraim Al Anquava, a Spanish refugee, Tlemçen became once more a center of the Torah and of Jewish life. The name of the Rab, as he is called for short, is held in veneration at Tlemçen; there is a yearly *ziara*, or festival, which draws thousands of Jewish pilgrims to the tomb of the dead rabbi.

Here is one of the traditions which are connected with this Rabbi[69]:

"Rabbi Ephraim Encava (Al Anquava), son of Rabbi Israel Hakadosh, the martyr, the Rab of Tlemçen, was one of the many Jewish scholars who, in the year 1391, or the year 5,151 of the world, came to seek refuge in Africa from the bitter persecutions in Spain. After having crossed the sea, he reached Morocco and sojourned at Marrakesh (city of Morocco), and then proceeded, always by sea, to Onein.[70] From there the rabbi came to Tlemçen seated on a lion which had for a halter an enormous serpent issuing from its mouth. On arriving, he halted in a field (on the road to Hennaya, a village close to Tlemçen) near the gates of the city, at the spot where to-day is found the grotto called 'the Spring of the Rab.' Struck dumb by the

[69] According to Rabbi Abraham Meir in his book on the Rabbis of Tlemçen.

[70] In Hebrew הוניין figures in the Responsa of Ribash and Rashbaz. It is a maritime port situated in the region of Nemours, which is still called Cape Nun or Noe. See R. Judah Ḳallace in his manuscript work משיח אלמור, quoted by Rabbi Abraham Meir. This port existed until 1509, the date of the taking of Oran by the Spaniards. It is a center of Jewish legends concerning Joshua ben Nun. See further on.

sight of a man leading a lion with a serpent, the natives, and even the sultan of the city, came forth to meet him, and respectfully offered him the right of sojourn in the city. Rabbi Ephraim installed himself in a ruined house, in the street which afterwards received his name (The Street of the Rab), and took up again the talmudic studies which his flight from Castile had interrupted. At the same time he practised medicine in the district, and was responsible for several miraculous cures, which was not astonishing in the light of the marvellous medical knowledge which he later demonstrated.

"The Sultan who was then reigning at Tlemçen had an only daughter, whom he loved devotedly.[71] Shortly after the arrival of the Rab, the princess was stricken with a grievous illness. The physicians of the court, of the city and of the province labored night and day to find a remedy, but, like the soothsayers long ago at the court of Pharaoh, the princes of Arabian medical science labored in vain.

"Then the counsellors of the King said to him: 'Master, this Jew who came to our city mounted on a lion must be a messenger of God (Resul Allah). Since his arrival he has performed many marvellous cures, and he will of a certainty find a cure for thy beloved daughter.'

"The King was delighted with this counsel, and ordered Rabbi Ephraim to appear at the palace at once. The Rab, after having addressed a fervent prayer to God, hastened to the Sultan and was im-

[71] The Sultan Abu Tachefin, who reigned from 1389 to 1393.

mediately ushered into the chamber of the sick princess. After having looked at her, the Rab prescribed a very simple remedy. A few days after the visit of the Rab the princess was completely restored to health.

"The despair of the King was changed to the wildest rejoicing. He sent for Rabbi Ephraim and, having embraced him, said: 'Messenger of God, what reward can a father make to the man who has saved his daughter's life?' 'Great King,' replied the Rabbi, 'if thy servant was able to find a remedy which saved thy daughter from death, it is because God inspired him. All the reward which thy servant seeks is permission to bring to Tlemçen the Jews who dwell now in Agadir and elsewhere, that here they may unite in free worship of our God, who is also thy God; and to that end I beg thee for permission to build a small house of prayer, for the construction of which we ourselves will pay.' The King readily gave the rabbi the permission he sought, and sent him away with many presents.

"Then little by little Rabbi Ephraim brought over to Tlemçen the Jews who were living outside the city, and among them were Jews of Morocco and refugees from Spain. Together they built a little synagogue on the very spot where now stands the great Synagogue of the Rab. The community of Tlemçen was founded. And Rabbi Ephraim was its rabbi and its chief till he died in the year 1442 of the Common Era, in the reign of Abu Melek Abd el Wahid."

The memory of the marvellous medical skill of the Rab lingers on to this day. A certain Christian of Tlemçen, Gaspard Alamo, donates several litres of the best oil to the *Ner Tamid* of the Rab every Passover, in grateful commemoration of the miracle whereby the Rab once saved one of his ancestors!

INSCRIPTION ON THE TOMBSTONE OF THE RAB.

שמחו בו וגילו

זה מצבת קבורת גאון עזנו עטרת ראשנו נר ישראל עמוד הימני אדונינו מורינו ומקובל אלהי המפורסם בכל נפוצות ישראל בעל הנסים מריה דהא אתרא גבר רבנא רבנא הרב הגדול רבינו אפרים אנקאווה זכותו יגין עלינו ועל כל ישראל אחינו אשר קבלה בידינו מפי זקנינו נבוקש בשיבה של מעלה שנת ר"ב" לאלף השישי ת'נ"צ"ב"ה"ח ועל ידי חלום נתגלה לנו יום א' לחודש כסליו היתה מנוחתו כבוד היום הזה יום ג' בשבת קדש יום שכפל בו כי טוב ששה ימים לחודש תשרי שנת א"ך ט"ו"ב לישראל לפ"ק נתנדבו אנשים חשובים..... וחדשו המצבה הזאת לכבוד הרב זי"ע..... של..... זכות הרב..... זרעם..... עלינו ועל כל ישראל אחינו יאמר די לצרותינו ויביא לנו משיח צדקנו במהרה בימינו ב"ע"ה א"כ"י"ר.

TRANSLATION.

"This is the tomb of him that was our pride, the crown of our head, the light of Israel, our support, our chief and our master, a divine Cabalist, illustrious wherever Israel is scattered, performer of miracles, the head of this community, the chief of all rabbis, the Great Rabbi Ephraim Anquava.

"May his worth be a protection to us and to all our Israelite brothers. Tradition tells us that he was

taken into the Celestial Assembly in the year 5202 (may his soul rest in peace). It hath been revealed to us in a dream that he was buried on the first of Kislev, on Tuesday, the day when God twice proved the perfection of His creation. On the sixth of Tishri of the year 5609, the elders of the city, having gathered the money together among themselves, erected this tombstone in honor of the Rab (may his worth be our protection), our Master, Rabbi Ephraim, the son of our Master Rabbi Israel Hakadosh Anquava. May the merits of the Rab be a protection to their descendants, may he protect us and our brothers in Israel; may he pray God for an end to our sufferings and may he bring us the Messiah quickly, in our own days, with the Help of God. Amen."

At the end of the little plot of cultivated ground is the brook of the Rab, the waters of which are frozen even in the height of the Algerian summer. Near this spot, says the tradition which we have just reproduced, the rabbi arrived one Friday evening when Sabbath was approaching; weary with much travelling, he could find no water to quench his burning thirst. Seeing the gigantic rock near which he was lying, he stretched out his arm and touched the stone with the palm of his hand, and the rock, like the one which Moses touched in the wilderness, gushed forth water immediately. Since those days the brook has continued to flow, and its waters, say the Jews of Tlemçen, have many marvellous properties.

This brook is not the sole memorial of the sojourn of the Rab. At the entrance to the Great Synagogue,

known as the Synagogue of the Rab, which was restored in 1875 and in 1890, there is a little hut-shaped monument of glass, stained and finely cut, which contains a large נר תָּמִיד, or Perpetual Light, which burns all year round with the oil which is brought as an offering by the faithful.

On the Sabbath and on feast days a השכבה (Prayer for the dead) is repeated for the repose of the Rabbi, and every year, on the evening of Rosh Hodesh Kislev, the Hillula of the Rab is celebrated.

There have been many rabbis at Tlemçen, and to-day the religious life of the city is healthy and vigorous. The community of Tlemçen has often been subject to persecution, and in 1543 the Spaniards sold the Jews as slaves, but they were bought back by the Jews of Fez and of Oran.

Tlemçen has preserved in a large measure its African character, many of its inhabitants still living very differently from the manner of Gallicized Jews. We will devote some time to the manners and customs of the place, since they will give us a very fair notion of Jewish life in Africa before the French occupation.

The Jewish population of Tlemçen is composed chiefly of artisans: tailors, shoemakers, embroiderers, carpenters, tinsmiths, silversmiths, and drivers, whilst some of the girls work in the factories or find places as servants in European households. The remaining Jews are merchants, but there are few rich ones among them. The houses in the Jewish quarter

are distinguished by their blue and green colors; the houses of the Arabs are white, and very rarely yellow.

Very many of the Jews still wear the typical Algerian dress. The head-gear for men is a skull-cap (*bereta*); next to the skin they wear a shirt with a cravat, called *gorbata*, the ends of which are tied together; on top of that are two vests (*mekpule*), one of which buttons from the bottom upwards and the other is worn open with deep pockets inside; broad Turkish trousers (*ceruel*), an overcoat (*robbi*) equally broad, a colored, silken belt (*hazzam*) and slippers without any uppers complete the costume.[72]

The following is the costume of the Jewish women: for out-door purposes they use a long red or blue shawl (*terbile*), a velvet girdle (*hazzam*); a corset-cover (*juibi*); broad trousers (*ceruel*); a dress with long sleeves, or a long caftan with short sleeves; and above that a gold-embroidered wrapper (*beden*), flat sandals, with leathern soles (*kerkeb*). Jewish women also wear gold bracelets on their arms, pieces of money in their hair, and an embroidered kerchief over the braids of the hair.

Religion plays the leading rôle in the life of the people. The organization of the community is very much the same as that found in Morocco. At the head of the community is a committee of five members, who hold the following offices:

Haham-el-Belad, the religious chief; the *Moqaddem*, the lay head; the *Gabbai*, the head of the burial society; the *Gizbar*, treasurer; the *Haber*, co-opted member of the committee. The committee is chosen by the people,

[72] For details, see Bel, "Tlemcen et ses Environs."

and has the coöperation of the *Dayyan* (the judge rabbi). There is also a modern rabbi from France. There is a *yeshibah* for the study of the Talmud, a Talmud Torah, a burial society, a society to help poor couples to marry (*Mohar Habetulot*), and, lastly, a society of *hayyatim* (tailors), which makes a hereditary cult of the profession of shroud makers.

Tlemçen has also its '*Asarah Batlanim*, or *Shemara*, old men who recite Psalms and passages from the Zohar in the synagogue and in houses of mourning.

The religious ritual of the community is Sephardic, but on festivals certain *piyyutim* are recited which are not found in the ritual of other Spanish Jews.

Following are some of the customs observed on the Jewish festivals. During the ceremony of Hakkafot on Simhat Torah (the last day of the Festival of Tabernacles) the synagogue is brightly illuminated; two children stand over the *Almemor*, waving branches adorned with candles, flowers and fruits. Part of that night is spent by the women and girls in dancing and in shouting joyously: "yu-yu" (greeting!). The next day the girls don masquerade costumes—much as they do during the Feast of Esther, when they give much charity, but when they also overindulge in *mahia* (brandy).

On the evening of the eighth day of Passover the Jews buy green corn from the Arabs, which they suspend in their houses from the ceiling. There they let it hang until the Feast of Weeks (Shabuot), and during the Omer they all eat of the corn, together with a sort of pancake, first dipping both of these in milk. On the

day after Shabuot is the "Feast of Waters," when the Jewish women besprinkle each other. This festival is also observed at Tripoli and elsewhere. The day after Pesah is called the *Mimuna;* on that day every family has a little festive gathering, at which a plateful of cus-cus is offered to the guest. On the thirty-seventh day of the Omer they celebrate a Hillula (a festival held over the graves of the saints), in honor of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai.

The Jews of Algeria have a special festival which recalls the *Bessissa* of Tripoli; this is the festival of *Sion*, which is celebrated by a family feast on the Thursday preceding the reading of the portion Yitro (Exodus 18).[73]

There are numerous popular customs and superstitions, even among the Gallicized Jews. The following are among the more interesting:

As soon as a child is born, a pious woman puts honey on its lips. To keep demons from the bedside of a child the Hand of Fatma is painted on the wall, and (as in Poland) they suspend *shemot* and cabalistic formulas over the bed. On the evening before the circumcision the young son is given a bath in warm scented water, in which bracelets of gold and silver have been steeped for some time; this brings good luck. Then, in the midst of dancing and singing, the child is dressed in the robes which have been sent him by the *Sandek*, or godfather. The piece of linen which has received some of the blood of the circumcision is

[73] See Abraham Meir, ibid.

suspended over the bed of the mother until the time when she is able to be up again.

On the occasion of the Bar Mizvah a feast is given by the parents of the boy. On the afternoon of that day a hairdresser cuts the hair of the young man and of his companions.

Betrothals are marked by a number of very curious ceremonies. They are arranged by parents, often without even the knowledge of the young people. The deed of betrothal is drawn up and the date and conditions of the marriage are fixed without the presence of the parties most concerned. The week following, the father of the girl gives a feast and brings the young man to his house with music; then the feasting and rejoicing last till early morning. The young man sends his *Arusah* (betrothed) a loaf of sugar, ornamented with eggs, also slippers and trinkets. Most of the evening the young man remains surrounded by his companions; during the festival his future parents-in-law present him with a gift of gold coins—called the *sultani*. The girl, who till then has remained unseen, is then brought forward; she is seated on a rug, and her hands and feet are painted with henna, the color of personal ornament in Africa. The same thing is done for the young man, and then the girl is arrayed in jewels and trinkets.

The wedding ceremonies begin eight days before the actual marriage. The friends of the two families gather at the house of the young man, and there a piece of white linen is torn in two, a symbol of the purity of the bride. For seven days after this

ceremony the girl remains pure. On the Sabbath day visits and good wishes are exchanged: "*Siman Tob!*" ("Good luck!"). The evening before the marriage a feast is given at the house of the young man. A barber cuts the hair of all the male guests, while music is played. On the day of the marriage the girl is taken to the ritual bath; her face, her hands and her feet are painted with henna, and honey and almonds are placed in her mouth. She remains motionless, under the guard of two rabbis, till the moment comes for her to depart; then she leaves to the sound of music. In the little villages it is the custom for the bride to wear a little pointed bonnet. Thus adorned she enters the house of the bridegroom, and there all the friends are gathered to rejoice and to hear the *piyyutim* which the rabbis recite. For a month she does not leave the house of her husband; and during that time there are several family reunions, even after the first seven days of rejoicing. Eight days after the marriage the husband cuts a lock of hair from the head of his wife, braids it with red ribbon and hides it. The woman then breaks a vase filled with water, and the husband pelts her with earth-nuts. After this ceremony she dons a wig, and is looked upon as a married woman.

Customs concerning the dead are numerous and superstitious in the extreme. The religious interment of the dead is entrusted to the *Hebrah.* At the death of a pious man, or of a Cohen, the rabbi throws seven stones on the corpse, or even beats it, that it might thus expiate its sins. The members of the family

break a piece of silver into four pieces and throw them into the grave. In some places this money is thrown to the poor.

The cemetery which holds the parents and the saints of these Jews is not, as with us, a place of sadness. On the contrary, it is a place which witnesses many of the joyous festivals of the people.

CHAPTER IV

JOSHUA BEN NUN IN AFRICA

The mountainous region which stretches from Tlemçen to the mountains and to the plain of the river Mulwiya forms a part of the Atlas of Morocco. Before the French occupation this district was Moroccan in character. Destined by its geographical position to be a buffer state between Morocco and the kings of Algeria, this country has preserved its ethnic independence down to our own times. It is true that in the coast towns the Arab dominates, but in the interior, particularly in the mountains, the native Berber has maintained his liberty and his individuality against all invaders. It is in this district that we shall find groups of people which have survived from ancient times; here we shall find folk-lore and traditions which have passed unaltered through generation after generation for many centuries.

Among these traditions there is one which dominates the folk-lore of the country of the Traras. It is a cycle of traditions, woven round an ancient biblical character, the founder of the Jewish people—Joshua the son of Nun.

By what historical miracle has the name of this general who, after all, occupies only the second place in Jewish tradition, penetrated to a country which, placed opposite the Pillars of Hercules, is so distant

from the Holy Land? In a book of ours, devoted to scientific theories, we have attempted some explanation of this phenomenon; in this work, which is nothing more than a collection of facts and observations, we can only present evidence which supports our theory, however startling the conclusion itself. But before we deal with the legend of Joshua ben Nun, it seems best to review here a number of historic traditions which have their origins in earliest antiquity. These traditions will place the legends of Joshua ben Nun in a more interesting light, for it is certain that they are almost as old as the Phoenician colonization of Africa, and have always been known in the country.

There is an old Hebrew tradition that at the time of the conquest of the Holy Land by the Israelites, under Joshua the son of Nun, certain Canaanite tribes migrated to Africa.

One Tosefta,[74] quoting an older source, says that when Joshua approached Canaan, he told the inhabitants that three courses were open to them: they could either leave the country, or they could sue for peace, or they could declare war against him. The Girgashites, among others, preferred to withdraw into Africa. The Tosefta goes on to say that the Amorites, the Kadmoni, the Kenites, and the Kenizites—some of whom figure among the founders of Carthage—also went to Africa. These traditions date from a period when communication between Africa and Phoenicia was continuous. The proper names of Girgash and

[74] Shabbat, 18. See Slouschz, "Etudes dans l'Histoire des Juifs au Maroc," p. 56.

Kenaz are often to be met with in Carthaginian inscriptions.

The Talmud[75] says that the Canaanites in Africa asked Alexander the Great to restore to them their country, which had been taken from their ancestors by Joshua ben Nun.

These traditions have found a place in the Books of Jubilees (IX, 1) and of Enoch (XIII, 22). They have been ratified by the Fathers of the Church; thus St. Jerome calls to witness the Talmud to support his statement that the Girgashites established colonies in Africa[76]; and Saint Augustine designates the natives of Africa as "Canaanites."

These traditions persisted until the sixth century. Thus, quoting from an Armenian author of the fifth century, Procopius, the Greek author, says: "They (the Canaanites) still live in the country and use the Phoenician language. They built themselves a fort in a city of Numidia, in the place where Tigisis stands to-day. There, near a great fountain, are two steps of white stone, on which are Phoenician inscriptions, saying: 'We are those that fled before Joshua the son of Nave, the Brigand.'"

This is the statement of antiquity on the legends of Joshua ben Nun in Africa; without entering into the historic value of this statement we may see at once that these legends have persisted since Phoenician times. We may mention now that these legends concerning Joshua are duplicated in those which concern

[75] Tal. Bab. Sanhedrin, 91a.

[76] Onomastica Sacra.

Nun, his father; that in Roman times there was a "Castle of the Syrians" near Lalla Marnia, on the Moroccan frontier, as a Latin inscription testifies; and that at Ujda there is another legend concerning a biblical personage, named Yahia (Johanan) ben Yunes.

Furthermore, it is said that in the seventh century the country was occupied by the Mediuna, who at the time were professing Jews. There are several spots which bear such names as "The Ridge of the Jew," "The Castle of the Jews," etc.

There is a spot where they say Sidi Ucha ben Nun (the Berber form of Joshua son of Nun) lies buried. Joshua, certain traditions say, after having performed various miracles with a number of marvellous fishes which he found in the sea, pursued the Canaanites as far as the Gulf of Beni Menir. There he died, and was buried side by side with his father Nun.

To reach this place the traveller must pass through the curious town of Nedroma, where there is a Jewish community of a hundred and fifty families who live after the fashion of the Moroccans. The present inhabitants of the country, which stretches as far as the sea, are Berbers of the group of the Traras, who occupy part of the former territory of the Mechuna. Several tribes formerly professed Judaism, and have preserved Jewish customs and Jewish names. Among them may be mentioned the Beni Daud, Beni Ichu, Beni Arun, Beni Chuaban. M. René Basset was the first to call attention to this fact.

I spoke on this subject with a cultured Berber, a municipal councillor, Mohammed ben Rahal, who knows the history of the country thoroughly, and who, though himself a Mussulman, asserts with certainty that the population of the country is of Jewish origin.

The sanctuary of Nebi Ucha is very popular among the Jews and the natives of the district, who often go there on pilgrimages. I was anxious to study the facts at first hand, and determined to visit the place. The road to the sanctuary lies through uneven and picturesque country which slopes down to the sea. Two little gulfs run into the land, and on the coast is situated the *qubba* which is known as that of Joshua.

The building stands in a valley which runs down to the sea, and is surrounded by a stone hedge. The country is deserted. Only a single Berber family can be found here, and its members look upon themselves as the guardians of this sanctuary. It was one of these traditional guardians who led me into the court of the *qubba*. In the interior I was shown a long stone which, buried in the earth, extends as far as the wall of the yard. This is the very tombstone of Nebi Ucha. The Arab explained, with naïve solemnity, that the Saint was a giant equal in height to the length of this stone.

It seemed to me that we were concerned with some ancient Hercules, perhaps a Hebrew adaptation of the hero Melkart of the Phoenicians, a kind of Samson, the conqueror of Africa, who was the prototype of the Greek Hercules. It might be a perverted survival of Joshua, the conquering Israelite, canonized by the

primitive polytheistic Jew. The whole thing is shrouded in baffling obscurity.

And yet, this appearance of Joshua the Conqueror in the maritime country which, lying opposite the Pillars of Hercules, recalls curiously the country of Carmel near Haifa, is striking evidence that there was a time in the history of Africa when the Jewish genius fought for supremacy with the genius of the Tyrian Melkart and of his rival Hercules. This strange and obscure sanctuary, worshipped by the natives, is in itself proof of the fact that on the eve of the Arab invasions Africa was on the point of becoming Jewish.

"Who was this Joshua?" I asked the guardian of the sanctuary.

"An Israil" (Israelite), he answered.

"So he was a Yehudi, a Jew!" I insisted.

He looked at me steadily, and then gave me an evasive answer:

"I do not know: an Israil."

I learned afterwards that according to a tradition, the Jews will finally return and take back the sanctuary of which they have been robbed. The poor man must have thought that I had come to turn him and his family out!

One enlightened Arab who knows the country well told me the following: The Berbers are so deeply attached to this sanctuary, and they have preserved so well the traditions of their Jewish origin, that if the Jews were actually to return and retake the sanctuary, all the tribes of the Beni Ichu, Beni Arun, Beni

Daud and Beni Chuaban would certainly become Jews again. The statement is perhaps an exaggeration, but it appears that these good Judeo-Berbers would be very loath to abandon their hero.

A little further down the rock which slopes to the sea is a grotto surmounted by a white *qubba*, which the natives say is the tomb of Nun, the father of Joshua. I have mentioned elsewhere that Nun is the synonym for Fish, and that we are dealing in part with a God-Fish, or Dagon, who still occupies an important place in the folk-lore of the Jews of Africa.

At Tetuan, at Tangiers, and at Gibraltar—that is, at the Pillars of Hercules—there is a kind of fish which Jews are forbidden to eat. It is said that Moses and Joshua met with this fish when they were in this part of the world and, with its aid, performed certain miracles.

CHAPTER V

THE KSURS OF THE SAHARA

What the Jebel is to Libya, the oases of southern Tunis and the Ksurs (forts) of the Sahara are to French Africa. In the oases, some of which are several hundreds of miles away from Tell and from the inhabited northern country, there are certain settled populations which lead a desert life, and act as intermediaries along the desert roads. The main food of these people is dates. These oases are valuable not only because of the income yielded by their dates and figs but also because they serve as stations for the caravans which pass between the north country and the far Sudan. It is a country of camels, of which the finest type is the Mehari.

These oases are scattered in groups, like archipelagoes of the desert, and provide a stopping place for caravans after these have been travelling in the desert for several days. The populations of these oases are of various origins. In southern Tunis the oases are occupied by pure Arabs, or by Arabs of Berber origin, while the Mzab is a Berber country, with the Berber language and with an heretical religion. In the group of the Tuat—some thirty days distant from the north country—the negro and Moorish population is Arabianized and orthodox.

The regions of the Sahara which the French genius

has conquered and pacified, and the history of which would form a colonial epic, are now accessible to the explorer—though not to the tourist or traveller, who would be deterred by the natural difficulties of the country, and by the hardship of having to travel on camels day after day across an arid country of sand and rocks.

And it is not at all surprising to encounter in every part of the desert traces—and even survivals—of a primitive Judaism which at one time played an important rôle in the whole region of the Sahara from Senegal to the very borders of Somaliland, and which even in our day has been a help in the French occupation. The oral traditions which are everywhere found concerning the early Jewish history of this country are beginning to find confirmation in Arab writings and even in inscriptions of Jewish origin. We are beginning to learn now of a great migration; in the time of Mohammed or even before, in the famous year of the Elephant, many Jews were forced into Arabia; we are told of the Yehud Chaibar (the Rechab), a tribe of shepherds and agriculturists, intrepid horsemen who at one time camped on the shores of the Red Sea, and who finally crossed the Sudan and penetrated to the farthest points of the Sahara. To them the Moorish natives, as well as the Arabs and negroes, attribute the founding of the first empires, the erection of the first public buildings in the country, the construction of the first canals and irrigation systems, and the institution of a social and economic régime which still survives in all Saharan communities.

"The Jewish epoch," says M. Martin, a learned French explorer and traveller, "was the golden age of the Ksurs of the desert."

For many years the author of this book has been gathering material for a history of the Jewish migrations into the Sahara and the Sudan. One part of his work is already done, the establishing of the authenticity of these migrations. The materials at his disposal will clear up many problems of the history of the Jews during the middle ages. To the writings of the Arabs and the oral traditions of the country he can now add the archaeological evidence furnished by the ruins of ancient Jewish cities in the Sahara and the Sudan, and the documentary evidence of Hebrew inscriptions, like those of Tuat, which date from the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries.

The writer has learned, however, from experience that even secondary sources should never be neglected; it is his purpose here to set on one side the material he has collected on the history of the Jews in the Sahara, and to devote himself to a description of those Jewish groups scattered on the borders of the desert which he has been able to visit and study at first hand.

Among the Jews of the Sahara we will mention first those of the oases of Tunis. The Jews of Tozeur find mention in a Roman text. At Medenin and at Matmata the Jews live in grottoes cut in the rock, and have a number of very ancient fortresses. Before the eleventh century the Matmata were an entirely Jewish tribe.

But it is among the oases of Algeria, the "Ksurs of

the Sahara," that the Jews have left the most distinct traces; not only Arab but also Jewish authors of the tenth century speak of the existence of Jewish groups, no doubt autonomous, to the south of Fez. Among others Abraham Ibn Ezra speaks as follows of the heretical Jews of Wargla (Exodus 12, 2, 2nd Commentary): "The heretics of Wargla celebrate their Passover in the following fashion. These misled people all leave their country on the fifteenth of Nisan, to celebrate the festival in the desert, as did the Israelites under Moses." These Jews are mentioned as heretics by various rabbis until the sixteenth century.[77]

Further toward the south, and across Tugurt, where Jewish communities were still in existence in the fifteenth century, there were conversions and persecutions. Two groups of the desert still retain their Jewish consciousness: the Mehajer, a settled population of Jewish origin, who are found at Tugurt and at Tuat, and the Daggatun, a powerful tribe of Islamized Bedouins, who camp on the route from Timbuctoo to the Sudan. The republic of the Jews of Tuat—I have distinct proofs on this subject—was destroyed between 1492 and 1510, but the descendants of these republicans still play an important part at Tafilet, in the Figig and in the Mzab. At Tafilet they still remember the time when parents at supper used to recite to their children: "Next year at Timamun" (Tuat), that ancient promised land of the Jews of the Sahara.

To-day the Jews of the oases number some fifteen

[77] See Yuhasin, ed. Philipowski, p. 215.

thousand. First of these groups of oases is the archipelago of Tafilet, to which I have tried in vain to penetrate. Here there are about fifteen Mellah, or Jewish quarters, with a total population of about 8,000 (?). In this country there once flourished the great city of Sijilmasa, with a rabbinical college which was illustrious from the tenth century onwards. The importance of the school of Sijilmasa is evident from the Responsa of the Gaon of Babel, published by Dr. Harkavy. Ibn Ezra lamented bitterly the destruction of this great school. In his elegy he wrote:

"I groan like a woman in sorrow for the evil which has befallen the community of Sijilmasa—this city of illustrious scholars, of wise men, the light of which is covered with shadows. The pillar of the Talmud is shattered, the edifice was laid with the dust, and the Mishnah desecrated and trodden under foot."

In the twelfth century persecution put an end to the prosperity of the Jews of the oases—they were either converted or they emigrated in the hope of better times. These times came with the accession to the Moroccan throne of the "Black Sultan" (a Merinide king of the end of the thirteenth century), who proclaimed religious liberty throughout his kingdom. But the Jews of Tafilet had fallen into a deplorable state of ignorance and superstition. They reverted to their primitive condition, which grew worse with the arrival of fugitives from Tuat. And to-day they form one of the most backward groups of Jews in the world. A number of manuscripts which I have in my possession

deal with the history of the Jews of this country till the eighteenth century.

Toward the year 1820 there appeared at Tafilet a cabalistic saint of Damascus—rabbi Yakub Bu-Hazera. No doubt jealous of the laurels won by the *Zaddikim* who were then in the ascendant in Poland and in Palestine, this rabbi established himself as a *Zaddik* at Tafilet. He began the practice of magic, performed miracles and delivered mystic sermons, while the faithful sat round him and drank *mahia* and whiskey copiously. Yet, being himself a liturgical poet, rabbi Yakub encouraged the composition of *piyyutim* and the study of Jewish religion. His descendants have kept up the tradition in Morocco, where they play the same rôle as is played by the descendants of the hasidic rabbis of Sadagora, Talna, etc. To the old cabalistic school of dead saints in southern Morocco may be added the cult of the living hasidim.

At Colomb Bechar, the terminal point of the Saharan railroad which begins at Oran, I met with a whole colony of Jews of Tafilet, who had come to take advantage of the secure conditions offered by the French government. A young rabbi of the family of Bu-Hazera came to establish himself in this colony. I passed the latter days of Sukkot of nineteen hundred and twelve with these people, and I must confess that I found in them very little of the Jewish character. Superstitious, violent, dirty, and even treacherous, they possess characteristics which distinguish them from all other Jews. Their own natural violence and the trying climate combine to produce the most

deplorable excesses in them. Thus, one of the Bu-Hazera, who had an only son, saw him assassinated by his relatives at a feast where there had been too much drinking. Assassinations are frequent among these people. The French officials who come among these Jews for the first time ("a whirlwind!" one of them called the experience) form the most curious notions of the real character of Jews—and foolish as these notions may be, they often form the basis of their attitude toward all other Jews. The heavy yoke of the savage Mussulman domination has been responsible for this state of degradation.

The mysticism of these people is extraordinary. Their jubilant antics with the Torah on the morning of Simhat Torah was a scene never to be forgotten. For them the Torah was no longer the mere symbol of a sacred thing—in their ecstasy it became a mystic fire, in itself an object of worship; it was the purest fetichism. There is a tremendous educational work to be done yet among these desert people!

Several hours' journey to the north of Colomb Bechar lies the oasis of Figig, amidst its wonderful palm trees. There are seven Jewish villages or ksur here.

This place is one of the most inaccessible which I have ever visited, for the Berbers have always been set against the admission of Christians. On the other hand, the Jews have always lived here—in a state of serfdom. Every chief or overlord has his Jews, whom he protects. Some seventy-five years ago a long war broke out between two chiefs, one of whom had

insulted a Jew belonging to the other! Unfortunately, the Jews of this region lost their manuscripts at the time of the last wars against the French. A well-educated Berber Sheik told me that most of the Jews of the oasis came from Tuat. He even gave me the names of the families who came from that Saharan district. The Jews placed themselves under the protection of the Berber chiefs, and relinquished in exchange certain of their rights: thus, during my stay at Figig I learned that at Zenaga the natives will not permit a Jew to wear shoes in the street or to mount a beast of burden.

A generation ago the Jews formed a considerable portion of the population of the oasis, but since then there has been a good deal of migration into the cities of Algeria, into Oran, Ain Sefra, Saida, and Bu-Saada, which has become an almost Jewish town. At the time of the French occupation the Berbers tried to force the Jews to take up arms against the invaders; the Jews refused, preferring to leave the country.

To-day there remain no more than 26 families (123 persons) at Zenaga, 11 families (43 persons) at Slinam, and twenty-five families (123 people) at Mudghir. These Jews are silversmiths, tailors, and merchants, who travel over the entire north country.

Polygamy is quite frequent among the Jews of this group. I met with a silversmith at Figig who had four wives. The oldest of the wives is the mistress of the house. She treats her rivals as daughters-in-law rather than as equals. Girls are married at a very early age. At Figig, as in other parts of Morocco, I

have met with married women of ten and eleven years of age. At Figig there is a valley which is known as the Gorge of the Jew, and in the district there are *Wed* (torrents) which bear the name of the Wed el Yehud. In the country there are also tombs of Jewish saints. One, rabbi Ishak, a rabbi of Palestine who died here many generations ago, lies buried near the oasis of Colomb Bechar.

The most interesting Jewish center in Algeria is the group of Mzab. These artificial oases were planted by a group of Berber heretics (Abadites) who, in the tenth century, fled from the Mussulman persecution. They established themselves in the desert, and to this day they have preserved the most mysterious rites and customs. In this place, cut off from all external communication, live some 900 Jews, 841 at Gardaia and 34 at Guerara. There are, in addition, 578 Jews at Bu-Saada, who came originally from Mzab. This town forms a Jewish colony, for nearly all the officials are Jews. There are also 378 desert Jews at Laghuat on the road to Algiers, and 220 in the oasis of Tugurt. A number of Jews from Mzab live at Wargla, the place which was inhabited by heretical Jews in the twelfth century. Near Wargla there is a place called the Jewish Wed.

We owe to my friend M. Huguet, who lived many years in Mzab, several very valuable facts concerning the Jews of this oasis who, more than any other Jewish group in the Sahara, have preserved their early traditions almost intact. I agree entirely with the learned doctor in supporting the tradition that

these Jews are the descendants of the Jewish group of Wargla spoken of by Ibn Ezra.

The other inhabitants of Mzab were very tolerant toward the Jews. After paying their *dzia* or tithe, they were subject to the same *kanuns* (code) as the natives. They lived in their own quarters, and were not permitted to leave them except in black robes. The women were not allowed to leave the country; this was a precaution to ensure the return of the husband who may be away on business. A similar disability was laid on the Jews of Tafilet and on those of the Atlas. Since the French occupation the Jews enjoy perfect liberty, and they now possess gardens and palm trees and wells in the oasis.

There are no Cohanim or Leviim among the Jews of the desert. To the long and careful work of Dr. Huguet we also owe a table of comparisons of the physical standards of the Jewish children of Mzab with those of the Mezabites proper, the Arabs and half-breeds. What he says of the Jews of Mzab may be applied to all the Jews of the Sahara and of southern Morocco:

"The adult Jew is generally tall and sparely built, lean rather than slender. His face is long, with a high forehead, his eyes are small, the eyebrows are heavy, but regularly arched. The nose is straight, the mouth finely cut and the cheek bones seldom protrusive. He has a long, silken beard, black as ebony, and wears, in addition, two *peot* or *sualef* (ritual fringes of hair). For dress he wears the *serual* (*gandura*), or the bournous and the *chechia* of the Arab.

"The women, though generally dirty, have strikingly regular features; the look on their faces is one of intelligence, and, on the whole, they are not lacking in either nobility or elegance. They wear a simple robe; their hair is done up in two thick braids on either temple; their general appearance is remarkably like our conception of that of the women of the Bible.

"Born of parents who are always too young, the children are generally puny and sickly, and nearly all of them suffer from eye diseases. The boys are mostly ugly, but there is a certain liveliness and intelligence in their eyes. The girls, who are much prettier, are graceful, and dress with a certain amount of elegance. The very young children are generally beautiful, with fine, delicate features."

This picture given by the French scholar of the Jews of Mzab holds good for nearly all the Jews of the Sahara who, living amidst dark or half-breed peoples, present some of the finest physical characteristics of the pure Jewish type.

The houses of the Jews are nothing more than huts of dried earth. The filth and the stench in their homes are simply indescribable. The Jews of Mzab have best preserved the customs and manners peculiar to the Jews of Africa. We quote below some of them, which have been described by Dr. Huguet and verified by myself.

The midwife is called *Kabla* in the North, *Ulada* in the Sahara. Very often the Jewish women dispense with the aid of the midwife; in bringing forth the child, the woman is seated over a hole sixty centimeters in

diameter and from fifteen to twenty centimeters deep, which is filled with warm ashes. As soon as parturition has taken place, the woman is given *cus-cus* and butter; a little later she is made to take *dechicha* to warm her up. *Dechicha* is a dish composed of ground corn (cooked in water and seasoned with red pepper), onions, butter and meat.

If the child is a girl, the mother does no work for three months after its birth; if it is a boy, she rests for a whole year. Children are nourished at the breast till they are two, or two and a half, years old. Every day until its fifth year the child is rubbed down with tepid oil, and the head and the nails are treated with *dbarraha*, powdered pine-bark mixed with oil. During the first year the child is kept in swaddling clothes, and after that it is dressed in a gandura. At the age of three—probably at the time when the child is weaned—a feast called *El Kestob* is held for the child, and after that it is called *uzir*. At the age of four the boy becomes a *soltan*, and assumes certain religious obligations.

From the ages of four and five children are picked out for marriage with each other. The boy is then called a *Melek*. But among the pious the marriage does not take place till the thirteenth year. Mothers of fourteen years of age are frequent, but the infant mortality is very high. Twins are frequent; if the children are of different sexes, the boy is nursed by the mother and the girl is nourished on goat's milk. Three days after her marriage the wife adorns herself and goes out with eight or ten companions to

visit her friends, who give her money or other presents. On the day of the marriage the girl visits the *mikveh* (ritual bath) and makes the *tebilah*, immersing herself seven times in the water. The water of this bath (like that of every other bath in the Sahara, where water is lacking) is changed every six months; it is, therefore, unspeakably dirty and unhealthy. In 1866 a native who was set to clean out the water of a bath was suffocated by the noxious gases rising out of it. After her bath the girl is led back to the house of her parents; there she attires herself in rich robes, but she leaves her feet bare, for it is only in her husband's house that she is allowed to put on shoes (*sebbat* or *filoli*, with soles of camel skin). About six o'clock the bride is seated on the skin of a wild sheep; her head is enveloped in a kerchief, in the folds of which a crown of burning candles is arranged. On this carpet she is lifted up by the young men, who carry her to the house of her husband, singing on the way. They mount the steps of the house, and bring her to the room on the first story, while the remainder of the guests wait in the court below. Then the bride-bearers begin to swing the sheep-skin rhythmically till, when there is sufficient momentum, the bride is lifted and thrown out into the yard below, where the guests catch her and carry her up to the bridal chamber. The guest who catches her as she falls has the privilege of being present at the first sexual union, in order to lend a helping hand to the young man if the girl offers any resistance to her husband. In the nuptial chamber there is only a

single carpet on the *dukhara* (the platform of hardened earth which serves as a bed) and a *mosbah* (a copper oil-lamp). The union of the couple takes place at once—and then the mother of the bride enters the room and, uttering cries of "yu-yu!" (greeting), invites the other women to enter. The soiled chemise is then taken off the bride and shown to all the women.

In another room the male guests rejoice, eating *cus-cus* and *cahuia* (a meat dish) and drinking *mahia* out of large glasses, while the women eat somewhat less noisily in another corner of the room. If the girl is too young, the ceremony is deferred. A woman who is *maghruga* (devirginized) is divorced on the spot, and the husband claims the return of all expenses. The husband gives the girl a wedding gift of from thirty-five to five hundred francs, which remains her personal property.

Even after marriage the girl is supported by her parents for many years, and it is to their house that she goes to give birth to children. The wife is not allowed to eat in the presence of her husband, and if he eats corn bread, she must eat barley bread; and she may not ask for meat. During the absence of her husband, a woman observes mourning; she does not change her clothes and, except for the hands, she does not wash.

Divorce is easy and frequent, and can be obtained even by the woman if she wants it. She has only to shout repeatedly: "Nifek, Nifek" (Your nose! Your nose!) to make her husband repudiate her; she is entitled to retain her wedding gift and to make provision for her children.

The Jews of the Sahara are exceedingly superstitious and believe in demons and in sorceries of every kind.

As soon as death is certain, the corpse is washed and wrapped in clean linen; it is then carried to the cemetery. Seven days of mourning are observed by the nearest relatives. A dead child is buried by children between the ages of twelve and thirteen. In northern Algeria the grave is made in two parts: the lower part is narrower than the upper and just wide enough to receive the corpse. In Mzab an ordinary grave is dug; by the side of the corpse are laid stones, and on these stones the slabs are placed. The monumental part of the tomb consists of two parts: an upright stone at the head and a flat stone enclosed in plaster; the flat stone bears the name and the date of death of the deceased. The oldest inscriptions I have been able to find in the Chabet el Yud do not go back more than a hundred and fifty years.

During the eight days of Passover no work is done. The Feast of Weeks is marked by libations; Jews besprinkle one another with water from the terraces or even in the streets. The morning after this festival the Jews of Mzab have a peculiar festival which they call ironically: "The Taking of Gardaia by the Jews." All the Jews unite in the open oasis and, mounted on mules and donkeys and bearing long branches of palm, make a triumphant entry into the city.

The children know all sorts of games. They play at shooting either with guns or with bow and arrow,

at knuckle-bones, and at horse, bestriding a stick and jumping about.

During the festival of Sukkot the Jews build a hut of reeds either on the terrace or in the court; this hut they adorn with jasmine, with sweet-smelling fruits and with greens.

We must repeat here the conclusion of Dr. Huguet:

"The type of the biblical Jew has been preserved to a remarkable degree among the Jews of Mzab."

And indeed, in all the districts of the Sahara, from Tripoli to Dra'a of Morocco, the traveller could easily imagine himself transported into some ancient Judean colony—a very primitive agricultural colony, for it has neither Cohanim nor Leviim nor any written traditions. For many centuries these colonies were the counterpart of the Jewish pre-Islamite settlements of Arabia, and to-day they are a marvellous survival of the Israelite epoch of the Judges in the wastes of the Great Desert.

PART V

THE JEWS OF MOROCCO

CHAPTER I

THE JEWS OF MOROCCO

Morocco—the Ancient Mauretania Tingitana, so called after its capital Tingia (Tangiers), has, until very recently, been almost inaccessible to Europeans. Admirably situated at the crossing of the great routes to the east, it stretches from the straits of Gibraltar to the mountains of Atlas; the country enjoys a temperate climate, and the soil is not only highly productive but is well stocked with minerals. The coast is thickly settled on the Mediterranean side, but on the side of the Atlantic it is bare and inhospitable. On the northern coast-line several of the ancient ports of antiquity were situated—Ceuta, the city of "seven brothers," founded by "Shem the son of Noah," Tangiers, the ancient Tingia, etc. The Phoenicians and the Romans occupied the littoral, but, on account of the resistance of the warlike tribes, never penetrated deep into the interior. The traces of the Roman and the Carthaginian occupation are to be found only on the mountain peaks and in the fertile valleys of the Sebu and the Mulwiya.

The Arabs did penetrate into the interior in the seventh century, but in such small numbers that the country remained essentially Berber in character. It was toward the end of the seventh century that Mulay Idris, the descendant of Ali, the son-in-law of

Mohammed, subjugated northern Morocco; his son and successor, Idris II, founded the kingdom of Fez, which afterwards became the nucleus of the Empire of Morocco. In the tenth century the Almoravid Berbers of the desert founded the new capital Marrakesh (Morocco), from which the name of the country was ultimately taken.

Since that time Morocco has passed through successive periods of prosperity and anarchy; the empire was split into two parts, that of Blad-el-Maghzen, consisting of the coast regions, agricultural provinces of the North, and of the early governmental center, and that of Blad-es-Siba, the country of the Berber tribes, the revolting district, which was always in a state of anarchy. From time to time great Sultans, like Mulay Ismail of the eighteenth century, succeeded in subjugating part of these tribes, but they were never held long in check. On the other hand, whenever the central authority relaxed, the anarchy spread to the quieter parts. Till this day Morocco has remained divided into two parts, one of which, though growing smaller and smaller from day to day, remains unconquered and as impervious to European influence as the remotest regions of China and the Congo.

In this country, the most mysterious of all that look toward the Atlantic, the Jewish race, which settled there in earliest times, and which for long periods was isolated from the European and Asiatic diasporas, played a most significant social and historical rôle. This rôle began with the Roman history of the country, but there was a strong Jewish influence at work

even in prehistoric times; till this day the native population bears the indelible stamp of this influence.

I have devoted many years to the study of the history and ethnography of the Jew in Morocco, and I believe that I have been able to pierce the obscurity which has hitherto enshrouded this subject. I have discovered numbers of facts hitherto entirely unknown. I hope to publish shortly, with the help of the French government in Morocco, a series of studies which will fill the gaps in the history of the Jews of Morocco during the last five centuries. I have been forced, for various reasons, to defer the completion of these studies. On the other hand, the nature of this work does not permit me to go into detail into that part of their history which has already been treated by others, or to deal with the reports of Jewish travellers and of workers connected with the Alliance Israélite. Before the appearance of these studies I will content myself with the following brief survey:

There are no monuments of the presence of Jews in Morocco in the Carthaginian period, but there are widespread oral traditions which seem to establish this as a fact. Thus in the Atlas and in the Black Wed we meet with traditions relating to the wars of Joshua, David, and, above all, of Joab, who, it is said, led their troops as far as the ocean. Leo Africanus, a European author of the sixteenth century, says that in the fifteenth century there were tribes in the Atlas which claimed descent from the warriors of David.

Again, certain customs and superstitions of the

country are of very ancient origin. It is certain that there were Jews not only in the maritime cities but also in the Roman colony of Volubilis. An inscription discovered by La Martinière, and dating from the first or second century, runs as follows:

מטרונא בת רבי יהודה נח

Matrona, daughter of Rabbi Judah, rests.

This inscription is followed by three others in Greek, two of which are certainly of Jewish origin.[78]

Here, then, is written confirmation of the existence of a Jewish colony in Volubilis (near Mequinez) at the time of the destruction of the Temple. In the seventh century, when the Arabs appeared in the country, several powerful Moroccan tribes were professing the Jewish faith; among others the Mediuna[78a] near Mulwiya, the Riata in Riff, the Fendelua in the center of the Atlas region, the Fazaz in the mountainous country near Fez, and finally the Behlula, towards the west, near the ocean.

In the seventh century the persecution of the Jews in Spain by the Visigoths caused a great number of them to migrate to Morocco.[79]

In 694 the Berbers and the Jews of Morocco planned, with the aid of the Jews of Spain, to conquer that country.[80] The attempt was discovered, and the Jews of Spain paid dear for their wild dream. However,

[78] See Slouschz, "Etudes dans l'Histoire des Juifs au Maroc."

[78a] Ibn Khaldun, History of the Berbers, I, 208, II, 135, etc.

[79] See my study: "Hébraeo-Phéniciens et Judéo-Berbères," pp. 388, 394, 409.

[80] Dozy, "History of Mauretania," II, 27, 28.

in 711, the conquest of Spain was again undertaken, this time by the Mussulmans in concert with the Jews. The first one to set foot on the soil of Spain was General Tarif ("a Jew of the tribe of Simeon"), after whom the island of Tarifa, opposite Tangiers, was named. Another Jewish Berber chief, named Kaulan el Yehudi,[81] followed the Arabs into Spain and, after the Peninsula had been occupied by the Mussulmans, tried to raise a rebellion against them. Among other Jews connected with the conquest of Spain were two sons of the Cahena, at the head of an army of Jerua.

The following suffices to show that the Jews of Morocco, like those of Algeria, were divided into tribes until the eighteenth century. Ibn Khaldun (ibid., II, 5-6) tells that in 807 the land on which Idris II founded the city of Fez belonged to the Beni Bhorgos and the Beni Khiar. Among the Beni Bhorgos there were Pagans and Christians as well as Jews. There was a constant state of war between the two tribes. This was the condition of the country of Morocco when Idris I came from Arabia to found a Mussulman state.

Arab historians[82] give us the details of this war of extermination and of forcible conversion which the conquerors waged against the Jews and Christians in their mountain fastnesses. There is a Hebrew legend which is very dramatic, but has little founda-

[81] See Graetz, "History of the Jews," Hebrew edition, vol. VIII, p. 38.

[82] See my analysis in "Hébraeo-Phéniciens et Judéo-Berbères," pp. 419–425.

tion in fact, and which is drawn from sources which we have been unable to trace, dealing with the wars which the Jews waged against Idris I and against his son, Idris II, the founder of Fez.[83]

On the other hand, it is certain that in the Atlas and in the south several groups of Jews maintained an independent existence for several centuries after the triumph of Islam.

In the ninth century there was a renaissance of Jewish science and literature in Morocco. The school of Fez rivalled the school of Kairuan with its sages and scholars. First and foremost came Eldad the Danite and Judah Ibn Kureish of Tahert, the one famous for his travels and adventures and for his work in linguistics, the other for his "Risala," or philological tractate addressed to the community of Fez. In addition were Dunash ben Labrat, grammarian and poet, who did so much to advance the study of prosody in the middle ages, Judah Hayyuj, the "Father of Grammar," and later rabbi Isaac Alfasi and many others. Numerous schools flourished throughout the country and could even be found in the open desert, like that of Sijilmasa; there was also a very important Karaite school, which produced philologists like David and Moses Alfasi and poets like Moses Drai.

This period of Jewish development came to an end with the rise of the mountain fanatics known as the Almohades ("Unitarians"), who began a war of extermination against all non-Mussulmans. This

[83] Fisher, תולדות ישורון.

movement, which overflowed into Spain, has been described by Abraham Ibn Ezra in a moving elegy.[84]

The conquest of the provinces of Sus and of Dra'a took place in 1132. The poet laments their fate:

"I rend my mantle[85] for that Dra'a, first among cities, is conquered; it came to pass on a Sabbath; men and women saw their blood flowing like water."

In 1145 the Jewish colony Sijilmasa, in the Sahara, was destroyed. Of the fall of Sijilmasa Ibn Ezra writes:

"I say, let there be mourning for the community of Sijilmasa, city of great scholars and sages; she sees her light covered with shadows; the pillars of the Talmud were shattered; the Temple of the Law was destroyed and the Mishnah was trodden under foot."

The destruction of this city was, indeed, a forecast of the future of Judaism in the Sahara. In the expression, "she sees her light covered with shadows," the poet alludes to the conversion of the Jews to Islam. An Arabic text dating from the twelfth century tells us of the miserable condition of these converts many years after they had abandoned their Judaism. At bottom they really remained Jewish. Tlemçen was destroyed in 1146. "The majesty of the community of Tlemçen," says Ibn Ezra, "vanished away, and the glory disappeared utterly." About the same time fell Marrakesh, the young capital. "That royal dwelling place, the noble city of Marra-

[84] See note 47.

[85] "Suth" (סוח), which might contain an allusion to the region of Sus.

kesh, saw its precious sons pierced by the sword, the cruel eye of the enemy did not spare them." Fez, the old capital, did not suffer so severe a fate. Most of the Jews embraced the Mohammedan faith, hoping for better times. "Alas!" says Ibn Ezra: "Lost, too, was the city of Fez, on the day when her sons were delivered to destruction."

According to the same authorities, the same end befell the Jews of Ceuta, the birthplace of Joseph Ibn Aknin (the pupil of Maimonides), and of Mequinez. Ibn Daud affirms that no Jew remained between Sale, on the Atlantic, and Mehdia in Tunis.

As a matter of fact, while most of the Jews of the cities were converted, the Jews of the Berber country were not pressed, and their numbers were even swelled by refugees from the cities.

About this time it was that Maimonides and his son came to Fez, to bring consolation to the unhappy converts; in their letters they exhorted these unfortunate Jews not to despair of divine grace. Taking the advice of Maimonides, some of the more wealthy Jews emigrated to Spain and the Orient. Numbers of Jews lost their lives in a new pseudo-Messianic movement. The remainder, degraded by the contempt and persecution of their Mussulman conquerors, sank into ever deeper abysses of ignorance and superstition.

This persecution, which lasted until the year 1288—that is, for one hundred and forty years—was the cause of the decline of a whole people, of the Jews who had been established in Mauretania since the Roman

occupation and had there written one of the most important chapters in the history of Israel. This chapter of Jewish history, still so little known, occupies us here.

So disastrous was the persecution of the Almohades that most of the native Jews of Morocco, from Debdu to Tafilet, claim in their traditions that all the present-day cities were founded by a sultan whom they call El-Akhal (The Black). Actually the tradition refers to a certain sultan of the Merinide Dynasty, Yakub Yussuf, who reigned at Fez between 1280 and 1307, and who granted religious liberty to the Jews and protected them against the fanatics.

The reconstructed Jewish communities, protected by the kings of this dynasty, drifted along without further development, until, in 1391 and particularly in 1492, the Jewish refugees from Spain brought in their rabbinic studies and the Spanish language. In the northern country Spanish is still spoken by several groups, but its use has died out in the rest of the empire. It was this mixture of successive immigrations with the native Jewish element which produced the Judeo-Arabic group of middle and western Morocco, with Fez as its metropolis; the south and the districts of the three mountain chains of the Atlas (the Little, the Middle and the Great) received very few of these immigrants. In these latter districts the population is Judeo-Berber, of native origin and with African customs, corresponding to the population of the Jebels or of Jerba, while the Arab speaking Jews of Dra'a and of Sus are of the same origin as the

Ksur of the Algerian Sahara. There is, however, this difference: the cultural influence of the Spanish element in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did penetrate into these remote regions, stimulating the study of the Talmud and of the Cabala, things almost unknown in the central Maghreb.

In the part of the book dealing with the Jews of Debdu the reader will find an instance of what became in time of the Jewish groups which were lost among the Berbers, and in that part which is dedicated to my travels in the great Atlas is described the fate of those Jews who, shut up in their mountain fastnesses, were forever removed from any European influence.

CHAPTER II

THE MELLAH OF FEZ

My study of the history and present condition of the *Mellahs* of Morocco being still unfinished, and some popular descriptions of the Mellahs of such communities, as Fez, Rabat, Mogador, having already been made by other writers, I will deal with this subject in my work on the history of Jewish civilization in Africa.

It is, however, my purpose to say something here on the Jews of Fez, whose history has already been treated by various writers (among others by M. Poznansky and by myself in a study of the history of the Jews of Morocco), for the reason that the history and the present condition of this first capital of Morocco will convey best the history and present condition of Moroccan Judaism.

Both in its appearance and in its social life Fez has always been a city of the Mussulman Middle Age. Situated in the center of a fertile and well-watered mountain country, it rises out of a plain with its white terraces and minarets; from afar can be seen the green roof of the sanctuary of its founder, Mulay Idris; a girdle of green gardens encircles the city, and round these still stand the high walls erected of old.

In the eighth century there were no cities in this region. Scattered Berber tribes lived here in their

deshra, villages surrounded by walls of rammed clay, and among these natives there were some Jews of the tribes Beni Khiar and Beni Borghos. In 810 Idris II, the son of the founder of the Moroccan empire, set here his new capital, Fez. Jews came from Andalusia and from Kairuan to establish themselves in the new city, and the districts of the city which they occupied were called el-Qarwiyin and el-Andalus. The old Jewish quarter lay near the Bab Hisn Saadun, part of which still bears the name of Funduq el Yehudi (the Market of the Jew).

From the ninth century onward the Jewish community of Fez prospered exceedingly. It dominated part of the trade of that world, attracting caravans from the Sudan and the Orient. It was in the ninth and tenth centuries that Fez gave birth to many Jewish scholars, like Dunash ben Labrat, Judah Hayyuj, etc. At that time the Jews lived in every part of the city. But the decline of the community began in the eleventh century. In 1056 the mountain tribes invaded the city and massacred 6,000 Jews. Most of the Jewish scholars emigrated to Spain and to Kalaat Hamet, in Morocco, the birthplace of Isaac Alfasi, whose family had also originally come from Fez.

About 1150 began the persecutions of the Almohades. "Alas, she was destroyed, the community of Fez, for her sons were delivered to pillage." At this time Maimonides and his father came to Fez, and there the former studied at the house of Rabbi Judah Ha-Cohen Ibn Sussan. Denounced because of his Judaism, the latter died a martyr, and Maimonides

and his household were forced to flee to Asia. It is proper to deny here the pernicious belief that Maimonides professed Islam in order to escape persecution. In our comparative study of the chronology of these events we have shown that for many years after 1150 Judaism was tolerated at Fez; only in later years did Judaism become a forbidden religion and that persecution began which claimed Rabbi Judah as its first victim.

There is still a curious old house in Fez which is pointed out as the residence of Maimonides, from which he had to flee in the night. There are thirteen windows in the house to symbolize, it is said, the thirteen dogmas of Maimonides.

For several generations the Jews stagnated as pretended Mussulmans. Only with the foundation of the Merinide dynasty, in the second half of the thirteenth century, were they able to return openly to Judaism. They were, however, still forced to wear a special dress, which consisted of a black *calotte* and black slippers (*babouches*). Later on the following restrictions were added: a Jew could not bestride a mule or a donkey, though he might ride a horse; he was forced to remove his shoes whenever he passed a mosque. These restrictions were not removed in some places until the time of the French occupation, and in other places they are still rigidly enforced.

The present Mellah was not instituted until much later. With the death of every Sultan there was always a period of unrest consequent on the claims of usurpers to the throne. During such periods the

Jews were naturally the greatest sufferers; their possessions were pillaged, their women outraged or led into captivity. Several families of Cohen declared themselves *halalim* (חללים, profaned) because the husbands refused to divorce the wives led away by the Berbers. Frequent massacres crowned the misfortunes of these Jews. Thus, in the fourteenth century, after an uprising, fourteen Jews were killed, and the massacre would have taken on terrible proportions if the Sultan himself had not intervened in person, riding on his horse among the rioters and stopping them at the risk of his own life. The Sultan then decided to build a special quarter for the Jews near his castle in Fez el Jedid (the New Fez). The added name *Mellah*[86] which, for some unknown reason, was given to this Jewish quarter, became general throughout Morocco, so that the meaning of the word came to be—the Ghetto. The Sultan gave the Jews a definite status, which has remained effective till this day.

In territories subject to the Sultan (Blad-el-Maghzen) the Jews received the royal protection which, by the contract of the *demma* (responsibility), ensured them their lives and their possessions in exchange for the *jezzia*, or special tax. The Jew who refused to pay the *jezzia* was looked upon as having broken the *demma*, and therefore forfeited the protection of the

[86] I have reason to believe that this term comes from an ancient local name and not from the unclean word "mellah." Certain Sultans, in fact, forced the Jews to cover the heads of executed criminals with salt, but this does not in any way explain the etymology of the word mellah.

Sultan. This law has become a tradition; it has been adopted by the native local chiefs of Morocco, who offer their protection to the Jews established in their territories.

From its very foundation the Mellah of Fez has been surrounded by a wall, which is still standing today, but this did not prevent it from being pillaged at least once every generation. As late as April, 1912, on the occasion of the proclamation of a French Protectorate in Morocco, the natives massacred the French colony and then pillaged the Mellah; houses were ransacked and fired; men were killed and women violated, and the remainder of the Jews were forced to seek safety in the palace of the Sultan, Mulay Unfidi.

One result of these massacres was the frequent conversion of Jews to Islamism. Thus, in 1465, the fanatical natives revolted against the Sultan because of the influence wielded by his Jewish vizier; they attacked the Mellah, murdered the vizier, and massacred many Jews. A number of the richest families embraced Islam, and formed a sort of financial aristocracy in Fez; among them were the Jesus, the Beni-Keran, the Bennani, the Bennis, the Cohens, the Saqali, the Shuqrun, the Tazi, etc., all of them prominent families of Fez which to this day are known to be of Jewish origin.

In 1492 came the exiles from Spain; before they reached Fez their numbers had been decimated by sickness and by massacre, but they made the city once more a great center of Judaism. In the sixteenth

century the Spanish Jews dominated the social life of the city and even of the Empire. But later the fratricidal quarrels of the members of the Saadian dynasty (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) brought many miseries on the Jews of Fez—persecution, pillage and sickness depleted their power and their numbers. Of the four thousand Jewish houses which the Mellah contained in the sixteenth century, at the time of rabbi David ben Zemero only forty were inhabited. The others were empty, their owners having either been massacred or fallen a prey to sickness or sought safety in flight.

During the seventeenth century a change took place in the ethnic character of the Jewish population. With the disappearance of the Spanish Jewish population and the influx of a Judeo-Berber group from Shawiya and of Jews from Sus, the Mellah of Fez again became Arab in language and in customs and has retained this character till our own times.

The influence of the Spanish Jews is, however, still manifest in the predominance of their rabbinic families. The Abenzurs, the Serfatis, the Serreros (and the Ibn Danans, who seem to have been native) at Fez, the Toledanos at Mequinez, the Angana, etc., have for centuries formed veritable rabbinic dynasties.

To-day the Mellah of Fez contains about ten thousand Jews. Among the Jews may be found rabbis of the highest rabbinical culture and intelligence, while the laity are intelligent and courteous, but somewhat degenerate; their manners are somewhat loose, but they are active people, very critical and very proud of

being Fasi—inhabitants of Fez. They have been prepared for their modern duties by the schools of the Alliance Israélite, and now they have an autonomous municipality, the administrators of which are chosen by the taxpayers of the Mellah. Another step in the direction of the emancipation of the Jews of Morocco was taken when, in the name of the author, General Lyautey signed a decree which gave the Jews guarantees against the justice administered by the Arabs, and which gave official recognition to the organization of Jewish communities.

The light of hope has broken at last on the Mellahs of Morocco, and it seems as if the tragic past, with its cruelties and injustices, will never return. May the great war which is raging to-day prove no bar to the happy change which is passing over the life of the Jews of Morocco.

At the beginning of this century the Alliance Israélite estimated the number of Jews in Morocco at 109,000. In all probability they number 150,000 to-day, out of a total population of about five millions.

The Jewish population is distributed as follows:

A. SPANISH SPEAKING JEWS:

1—The neutral city of Tangiers:	11,000	
2—Spanish possessions:		
On the Mediterranean Littoral:		
Ceuta	800	
Tetuan	6,000	
Chechuan	350	
Melilla	6,500	24,650

On the Atlantic:		
Arzila	800	
Larache	3,000	
El Ksar	1,500	
Elsewhere	1,000	6,300
Total of Spanish speaking Jews		30,950

A large number of the better class families speak French. At Melilla the Taza group speak Arabic.

B. FRENCH MOROCCO:

1—Cities of Central Morocco (French and Arabic speaking):		
Maritime Towns:		
Rabat and Sale	4,000	
Casablanca	10,000	
Azemur	1,000	
Mazagan	2,000	
Safi	2,000	19,000
Cities of the Interior:		
Fez	10,000	
Mequinez	6,000	
Wazan	500	16,500
2—Central Arab Berber Group:		
Mzab-Shawiya	500	
Setat and the Shawiya	1,000	
Seffru (near Fez)	2,000	
Taza and the two villages of the Riff	500(?)	
Debdu and the East	2,000	
Waja and the district	1,500	
The region of Braber	3,000	10,500

3—The Arab and Chleuh group of the South:		
Mogador	14,000	
Marrakesh	18,000	
Sidi Rahal	650	
Demnat	1,000	
Chleuh group of the Great Atlas	15,000	48,650
4—Groups of the Sahara (Arabic speaking):		
Groups of the High and the Low Dra'a	5,000	
Group of Tafilet	9,000	14,000
5—Various	5,000	5,000
Summary:		
Spanish Group	30,950	
Central Group	35,500	
Arab and Braber Group of the Center	10,500	
Arab and Chleuh Group of the South	48,650	
Groups of Dra'a and of Tafilet	14,000	
Various and omissions	5,000	
Grand Total	144,600	

CHAPTER III

SPANISH JEWS

Beyond the maritime region of Oran, on the other side of the little French port of Nemours, are grouped several Moroccan forts which dominated the road from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Here, in 1492, a number of Jews, expelled from Spain, took refuge and founded colonies. The colonies remain till this day, speaking Spanish and observing the customs of Spain —the only colonies which have resisted the fatal influence of the Jews of Barbary. Tetuan and Tangiers and—beyond the Strait—Arzila and Larache are islets of the Sephardic world which the floods of the Jewish emigrations from the interior to the littoral have not yet washed away, while all the other Jewish colonies—even that of Rabat, which still has its Spanish traditions—have been successively Arabized.

Among the Spanish towns the best known is that of Tangiers. This cosmopolitan city, situated at three hours' distance from Algeciras, is the natural port of Morocco. The ancient Jewish quarter was near the "Wed of the Jew," at some distance from the city. Towards the end of the eighteenth century this Mellah contained a Jewish population which, both by its customs and by its subjection to the uncertain Moroccan administration, resembled closely the Jewish towns of the interior. The proximity of Gibraltar,

which was settled by the English occupation at the end of the seventeenth century, and which now has a prosperous Jewish community, has had a beneficial effect on the Jews of Tangiers. In the nineteenth century representatives of the great powers took up their residence in Tangiers and, under this European protection, the Jews of this city have felt themselves free. In 1870 the Alliance Israélite founded a school in Tangiers. To-day the Jewish community is fully emancipated and organized in modern fashion. Its best representatives are wealthy and respected men, who speak French and Spanish perfectly. The younger men very often emigrate to South America, accumulate a fortune there, and generally return to their native country.

The family life of these Jews and the purity of their manners have suffered little change, but many of the racial qualities, such as hospitality and the feeling of solidarity, have almost disappeared. The new régime promises Tangiers, as an international city, complete autonomy; this will certainly be favorable to the Jews.

The fortress of Ceuta, which was held by the Spanish until the fifteenth century, was closed to Jews until the second half of the nineteenth century. To-day there is a Jewish population of several hundred in Ceuta, consisting mostly of merchants. They are nearly all natives of Tetuan, which is situated behind the peninsula of Ceuta.

Approached from the port of Saint Martin, which is some twelve kilometers away, Tetuan is one of the prettiest sights imaginable—its white walls and its

mosques rising on a plateau out of a green valley set in the midst of mountains.

The city is surrounded by a wall. The Kasbah and the Medinah (Arab city) are separated by another wall from the Mellah, which is a little town apart, with its own life. This is, indeed, a type of the classic Mellah, a city within a city, shutting its gates at night and ruled by its own laws. The Mellah of Tetuan has often been pillaged by the mountain tribes—and once by the Sultan Mulay Yazzid, towards the end of the eighteenth century. It has, therefore, known all the horrors of the Moroccan *razzia;* when I paid it my first visit in 1906 I found the population in a state bordering on panic. The mountain tribes were threatening to rise, and this Mellah was dangerously exposed.

Since the Spanish occupation the Jews of Tetuan have been more secure, for Spain is very favorably disposed to her Jewish subjects; but a revolt of the Berbers shuts the Jews up in the city, and cuts off all intercourse with the exterior. It has been a frequent complaint that the Spanish régime left things pretty much where they had been before. The Mellah of Tetuan presents a clean and comfortable appearance, and the population gives a European impression.

During the four centuries of their residence in this city the Jews have never lost contact with Spain. Closed in among the Moorish population in the mountains of Riff, these exiles form a Spanish colony which in customs and in garb still belongs to the fifteenth century. The Christian Spaniards who have

established themselves in the Mellah are no less backward than the Jews; indeed, the Jews are still the civilizing element of the population.

In the cemetery on the mountain side tier after tier of gray and white tombstones cover the graves of the first Castilian exiles; several celebrated scholars lie buried here, but, unfortunately, the ancient epitaphs have been effaced by time.

Only a generation ago Tetuan was a center of rabbinic and of Jewish studies in Morocco; but a sad change has taken place; Jewish studies are neglected, and Hebrew is being gradually forgotten. It was at Tetuan that the Alliance Israélite founded its first Jewish school in 1862. Like that of every other city, this school has exercised a great influence in the work of the emancipation of Tetuan.

The young people of Tetuan also emigrate frequently to South America; many of them have become wealthy there, and support their parents at home. Others, dissatisfied with conditions, emigrate to Gibraltar, to Ceuta and to Melilla.

Tetuan, the Sephardic city, rich in memorials of the past, is declining from day to day. It seems as though, after four centuries of enforced seclusion, these Jews are taking the first opportunity offered them of shaking the dust of Africa off their feet. The Jews of Spanish origin have neither desired nor been able to acclimatize themselves to Africa.

Melilla, another former military station of Spain, has recently become a mining center. Attracted by the security of Spanish rule, the Jews have settled

there in large numbers. The community which has sprung up under Spanish rule numbers from five to six thousand persons, divided into Spanish-speaking and Arabic-speaking groups. Most of the former are from Tetuan, Larache and Orabie; the entire community of Taza, which was destroyed in 1908, migrated to Melilla and settled there. The Arabic-speaking population, which observes Berber customs, has a district of its own.

Melilla is the port of the region of Riff and of the Mulwiya as far as Taza and Debdu. The rabbi of the city is a native of Debdu. Every week the Jewish caravans come to this port from the interior to sell their goods and to buy provisions. Twelve years ago there existed in the hinterland of Melilla, among the wildest tribes of Morocco, side by side with Mussulman groups of Jewish origin, two Jewish communities, that of Taza and that of Debdu, both of them important commercial centers.

The story of the ruin of the ancient community of Taza throws light on the sad condition of the Jews under the old régime of the Moroccan empire. Taza is one of the oldest towns in Morocco; the Jews assert that it is one of the Ceuta, the seven cities founded by Shem, the son of Noah; historically understood, this tradition means that the city was actually founded by the Phoenicians. By its geographical position the town dominates the Riff, the most shut in and most unknown region in Africa.

The tribe of Riata, which at one time professed Judaism, was never subjugated by the Sultans of

Morocco. The cult of the tribe which, under its Mussulman form, hides many pagan and Jewish elements, has never been studied by any scholar, but several groups of the tribe profess a faith which seems to approach that of the Druses of Lebanon. Thanks to their ancient relationship with this savage tribe, the Jews have been able to maintain themselves in these mountain regions, where no Christian would ever dare to set foot. Indeed, several Spanish refugees were able to find a home among the native Jews. The extreme antiquity of these native Jews is shown by several memorials from the middle ages, and by the fact that the Riata themselves at one time professed Judaism.

In the seventeenth century there were still Jews in the heart of the Beni Riata. A Jewish Sheik named Ben Mechaal became master of Taza and of the northern region of the Berbers. Even a Spanish Jew, Jacob Pariente, whose tomb may be seen at Taza, exercised political influence among the Riff; with typical oriental exaggeration the Jews of Tetuan conferred upon him the title, "King of the Riff."

Partly because of the traditions which they hold in common with the Berbers, and partly because of the services they have rendered them as commercial intermediaries, the Jews of Taza enjoy comparative comfort and affluence. Their pious community stagnated; from time to time it was pillaged; but it was never threatened by the natives. The insurgent Mussulmans and the dynastic pretenders did not dare to harm them, as possible future citizens; on the con-

trary, the last pretender, Roghi (1900), treated the Jews very favorably, and even conferred the title of *Kaid* on the chief Jew of Debdu.

However, a little more than ten years ago, the "legal" Sultan of the time, Abd-el-Aziz, sent a *Mehalla*, under the generalship of a Kaid, to fight the pretender. The Mehalla succeeded in overcoming the troups of the pretender, but as the soldiers of the Sultan lacked every necessity, were never paid, and were generally given as reward the booty of war, and as the Kaid found it impossible to pursue the Riata into their mountain fastnesses, he turned the Mellah of Taza over to his men. The pillage went on for three days and was carried out with the most revolting completeness. Women were violated; thirty men were killed in trying to defend them; the community was devastated and laid in ruins. Numbers of the Jews managed to escape and fled toward Fez, but an epidemic broke out among them and decimated them. The survivors were scattered among the Berber villages. One group of a hundred families, guided by an old *Shohet*, rabbi Joseph Morciano, set out for Melilla, but, threatened on the road by brigands, turned aside and stopped at a Berber fort. At the door of the fort they killed a ewe; this was the *debiha*—the act by which protection is begged from a Berber chief—and never in vain.

Faithful to local tradition, the Berber chief received them kindly, and for six months he provided them with food and shelter. Despairing of ever regaining their destroyed homes, these fugitives asked the chief

for an escort, and succeeded in reaching Melilla. The arrival of these unhappy refugees roused the pity of the little Jewish community, but it was too small to come to the aid of so large a contingent. Happily, the Spanish governor intervened. He appropriated a number of military tents for the refugees, and provided them with daily rations of bread.

It was in these tents that I visited these unhappy Jews in 1906. They were exposed to every sort of disease and privation. The old *Shohet*, showing me the misery of his little community, wept. "See," he said, "this is all that remains of the noble city of Taza, which will never prosper again. We weep for our destroyed homes, for our desecrated synagogues, for our dishonored women, for our martyrs. And we weep for the tombs of our ancestors, where we were wont to pray in time of misfortune; we shall never see them again!"

I believe that it was in these tents that I contracted the sickness which later laid me in the hospital of Tangiers, and which forced me to conclude too soon my first visit to Africa.

CHAPTER IV

DEBDU—A JEWISH CITY

If Jerba may be regarded as the type of the little Jewish homeland in Tunis, Debdu, the little mountain city, may be looked upon as the most typical Jewish settlement of unknown Morocco. The great mountain mass of Debdu is a sort of buttress to the mountains of Tlemçen of the Middle Atlas, from which it is separated by the valley of Mulwiya. The valley of Debdu, almost completely shut in by the mountains, forms a district of its own lying near the great route which leads through the pass of Taza from Algeria to Fez. The caravans come to Debdu from three sides: on the northern side they come from Melilla, passing by the Riff and the low Mulwiya and reaching Debdu in three stages; on the southern side they come through the valley of Mulwiya, passing by Kasba el Makhzen and Utat to reach Tafilet and the Sahara.

On the eastern side the French military convoys, since the occupation, pass by Ujda, a little Moroccan town which has been French for ten years, and which contains a Jewish population of about a thousand, claiming a very ancient origin; and by Taurirt, a new French fort where there are about twenty Jewish families. The road lies through the mountains of the Berbers. Thanks to the kindness of General Alix, I

was able to make part of this journey on a machine-gun automobile, completing the rest on horseback, in the company of a number of officers from the garrison of Taurirt. After travelling for fifty-two kilometers we reached the Fum of Debdu (the Mouth of Debdu), a plain split up by Weds; the scenery here is magnificent—a great valley dominated by the Gada, or crest, 1650 meters in height.

Here is the excellent description of this city given by M. de Foucault who, disguised as a Jew, succeeded, toward the end of the last century, in travelling through a part of unknown Morocco[87]:

"Debdu appeared: in the heart of a huge valley, a little city with rose-colored houses, nestling in the shadow of its minaret; around it extend meadows and gardens; above it loom great walls of rock, set with trees, and over all the crest of the Gada. I descend towards this bright place by a narrow and difficult path.

"Debdu has a charming location at the foot of the right flank of the valley, whose walls rise perpendicularly for the first eighty meters, forming a high bulwark of yellow rock, touched with golden tints, and adorned with the foliage of long creepers. At the summit of the bulwark begins a plateau, upon the edge of which stands an ancient fortress, whose crumbling walls and high minaret look majestically over the valley. Beyond the plateau a succession of sheer walls and steep embankments climb to the summit of the mountain flank, and there, five hundred meters above

[87] "Reconnaisance au Maroc."

Debdu, rises the huge, tree-crowned crest of the Gada. From the summit of the mountain the rivulets dash down, falling in long cascades over the abrupt walls, and weaving on their surface a net of silver. No words can convey the freshness of the scene. Debdu is surrounded by lovely gardens of vine, of olive, of figs, of pomegranates, of peaches, forming dark groves around the city and stretching in sombre lines along the edges of the Wed. The rest of the valley is covered with prairie, with fields of barley and of corn, which cover the lower slopes of the mountain."

According to this traveller and M. Nehlil, Debdu comprises about four hundred houses built of rammed clay; there are no walls in the city. The Mellah contains no more than one hundred courtyards, but this is explained by the fact that several houses give on the same yard. There are, in addition, some sixty yards in the Mussulman quarter. The city, which lies upon a slope under the Kasba of the plateau, is not surrounded by walls; it is divided into five sections, of which four are Mussulman—Kiadid, Ulad Abid, Ulad Yusef, Ulad Amara. The Mellah lies in the center and constitutes the greater part of the city.

The Arab city contains only one mosque, which is situated in the Ulad Amara, near the river. It is a picturesque building of rose-gray stone, surrounded by luxuriant gardens. Debdu contains 2,000 inhabitants, of which 1,400 are Jews.

The ancient history of the city is unknown, though there are a number of ruins which are attributed to the

Romans. It is certain that since historic times Debdu has nearly always been an important Jewish center. The Jewish population, which was formerly much more numerous, has been particularly tried of late. The Jews constitute two-thirds of the total population, and there are various colonies of Jews of Debdu scattered through Algeria and among the new Spanish and French settlements.

The Jewish character of Debdu struck M. de Foucault, who in 1885 wrote the following on the Mellah of the city (ibid., p. 250):

"The population of Debdu presents this curious fact: the Israelites constitute three quarters of it; out of about 2,000 inhabitants, 1,500 are Jews. This is the only place in Morocco where the Jews outnumber the Mussulmans. (This is not altogether true.)

"Debdu is the first place I have come to which carried on a regular trade with Algeria; intercourse between this town and that of Tlemçen is continuous. The Jewish merchants go to Tlemçen for merchandize, which is brought thither from the coast cities of Morocco; these goods they store at home, selling them gradually at the local markets. Debdu has some relations with Fez and Melilla, but all its business is done with Algeria."

From the economic viewpoint the activity of the Jews of Debdu is particularly interesting, but the importance of its markets has been exaggerated. The economic importance of Debdu is due less to its geographical position, since the town is really outside the great valley, than to the commercial activity of the

Jews. Located as it is in a spot sheltered from the pillage and devastation which threatened all settlements in the valleys and open regions of Mulwiya, Debdu was able to develop its commerce during several centuries.

Among the Jews of Debdu there are a number of jewellers, tailors and weavers. The women excel in weaving and in embroidery work. Morocco leather articles are also produced at Debdu. Numbers of families raise produce for sale in the gardens round the city. Sheep rearing is another trade which flourishes in the district. The market is held on Thursdays; it is attended only by the tribes of the district. The market place for the whole region of Mulwiya is Taurirt, and thither, since the French occupation, the merchants of the entire district come every Monday. Nothing could be more picturesque than the sight of some hundred Jews leaving the city on Sunday in a caravan with mules and donkeys laden with merchandise. One sees bearded men dressed in the black caftan of the Jews of Spain, or in a simple gandura, their heads covered by a fez, or by a kerchief, which is the only head covering allowed the Jews in some places of the interior. The boys are handsome, with lively eyes and with long black curls tumbling about their cheeks. The women are mostly pretty, but they seem prematurely aged and weary; their heads are covered with a handkerchief tied at two ends, a headdress peculiar to the Jewesses of the Moroccan desert. At Debdu the Jews mostly belong to the handsome Spanish type.

Although the houses are not over-clean, the Mellah presents quite a pleasing appearance, recalling somewhat the Mellah of Tetuan. There are about fifteen synagogues or private chapels in the Mellah; but apart from the one or two which resemble the synagogue of Tetuan, these places of prayer are ordinary rooms put by their owners to a holy use. The following are the principal places: the Chenuga (chenuga, from the Portuguese, esnoga, meaning synagogue; the Arab Jews call it Zla, but in Tunis the name esnoga is used) of the Ulad ben Sussan is the most important; the others are: the Chenuga ed-Dughan of the Cohanim (this synagogue was the subject of much quarreling, the Cohanim refusing to admit ordinary Jews), the Chenuga Bermellil, the Chenuga ben Hamu, the Chenuga Ulad Mechid, the Chenuga es-Seban, etc.

This list makes it evident that every group of the population has its own synagogue; for the Jewish population of Debdu has this characteristic in common with that of Jerba, that it is subdivided into several tribes or, rather, clans, each of which has its own quarter, its own place of prayer and its own traditions; thus these groups have lived for centuries in a state of continuous social antagonism.

Among these clans the Saqali Cohen is the most important, counting one hundred and forty "heads of families," or seventy families; the family generally consists of a group of near relatives who occupy the same court. The "head of the family" represents a family in the occidental sense of the word—that is,

the father, mother and unmarried children. These families claim an illustrious Aaronide ancestry, from the line of Zadok, the high priest of Jerusalem in the time of David. The quarrels of the Cohanim with their Morciano neighbors, who number a hundred and forty heads of families and forty families, have become notorious in the Jewish world since the seventeenth century. The little groups, like the Ulad Meralli and the Ulad ben Hamu, who have no high ancestral claims, side with the Morciano against the Cohanim, so that the two *leffs*[88] are evenly matched. The Ulad ben Sussan, who are descended from a family of illustrious rabbis, remain neutral and form a faction of their own; and the great synagogue, which is in some sort the official center of the community, is situated in the quarter of the Ben Sussan.

This factional tendency of the Jews of Debdu manifests itself in every aspect of their life, the religious, the social and even the political. The *leff* (communal group) of the Morciano has at all times refused to submit to the tyranny of the Saqali Cohen; since the destruction of the Kasba Dar Ben Mechaal the two communities have quarreled bitterly over the site which the Saqali Cohen occupied, and despite the genealogical arguments of the latter, the Morciano have refused to relinquish their claims.

In the chapter dealing with the history of Debdu the reader will see how violent these quarrels became—particularly in times of stress and trouble; very often there was actual fighting. In the majority of cases

[88] A Berber social group.

the rabbinic tribunals of Fez and Jerusalem succeeded in patching up a sort of peace between the dissentients, but this never lasted very long. (In the Hebrew journals of Jerusalem there are found, from time to time, echoes of these curious quarrels.)

At the time of the domination of Roghi (about 1900) the Morciano could find no better means of exasperating their adversaries, whose head, David ben Haida, had become an agent of the Pretender, than to proclaim Mulay Hafid Sultan of Debdu. Thus the two Jewish groups each had a Sultan of its own.

It is a fortunate circumstance that there are not more than two large Jewish factions among the Jews of Debdu. If the Saqali Cohen are Aaronides, or priests of noble origin, the other Jews of Debdu are ordinary Israelites, descendants of the lay tribes of Israel. If the Levites, who also claim an ancient priestly ancestry, had had a faction at Debdu, it is not difficult to see that the quarrels would have been embittered tenfold.

But here, as in the Hara Saghira of Jerba, the city of Cohens and of the Ghriba, the Aaronides have forearmed themselves by refusing admission to any member of the tribe of Levi. They have proclaimed that no Levite shall dare to set foot on the soil of Debdu, just as the Cohanim of Jerba have forbidden the sons of Levi to enter the sacred city of the priesthood.[89] They say that any Levi daring to disregard this prohibition will of a certainty be struck dead by God. In this we may see the traces of very old beliefs which

[89] See my work: "Voyage d'Etudes Juives en Afrique."

antedate rabbinism, for the latter destroyed all distinctions of caste among the Jews of Africa, as it no doubt did among the Jews of Spain.

However this may be, it is obvious that the ancient quarrel between the Cohanim and the Israelites, which was already condemned in Africa by the Babylonian schools of the tenth century, still survives in Debdu, a fruitful source of conflict and a constant burden to the social life of the community.

The manners of the Jews of Debdu have remained pure, and even severe. A woman who was recently convicted of the crime of adultery was excluded from the communal life of the city.

In general, the religious life of the Jews of Debdu resembles that of the Jews of the larger centers in Morocco. The customs and the ritual are of Spanish origin; to these have been added a number of traditions and customs proper to the Jews of Morocco. From the social point of view the most deplorable custom is that of child marriages; and if bigamy is rare at Debdu, it is overbalanced by the evil of mothers of twelve and thirteen, aged and used up long before their time.

In the Jewish world the population of Debdu is held in high esteem. In 1897, at the time of the famine in northern Morocco, M. Benshimon of Fez issued, through the Alliance Israélite, the following statement concerning the Jews of Debdu[90]:

"The Jews of Debdu are under the direct authority of the Sultan Hassan. The *Basha* (Pasha) of Taza is

[90] Bulletin of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1897, p. 78.

governor of the Mussulmans, and one Basha of Fez (there are two), Ba Mahomed, is governor of the Jews.

"The Jews of Debdu are not like the Jews of most Moroccan cities. Many of them have a trade, and the majority engage in commerce. There are among them many learned rabbis. They are men of dignity, and have never begged; this is their first appeal to the Jews of Fez for any other purpose than that of settling some religious dispute."

Nearly every synagogue has a Talmud Torah, where children learn Hebrew and religion. The knowledge of Hebrew is widespread in Debdu, and the city furnishes rabbis to a number of Jewish centers in Algeria and Morocco; I met with some of them at Nedroma and at Melilla.

A specialty of the rabbis of Debdu is the making of scrolls of the law; the *Soferim* (scribes) are expert in their work and are men of great piety, which recommends them particularly to believers. Jews of Morocco and of Algeria pay 500 francs for a *sefer* from Debdu.

Latterly numbers of families of workmen and of merchants left Debdu and settled in Taurirt, in Berguent and in the other centers occupied by the French military authorities; they were attracted to these places by the increased security offered them and the certainty of a more just rule. The community of Debdu maintains very close commercial relations with Melilla, its caravans covering the entire Riff and the Atlas as far as Tafilet.

Certain of the Jews of Debdu have already been of great help in the work of French occupation. Under an administration which would respect the dignity of this group, its good natural qualities would very soon find recognition; for, isolated as they have been for so many centuries in a corner between the mountain and the desert, these Jews have still been able to play an important part in the life of the most savage and inhospitable tribes.

The Jewish population of Debdu is divided as follows:

1. The Saqali Cohen, divided into five family groups: Ulad Daud, Ulad Mechic, Ulad Ryaaichia, Ulad Robni, Ulad Dugm. With their dependent groups they occupy about sixty houses and number about one hundred and fifty heads of families. The head of the Saqali Cohen is the Sheik David Ben Haida. The great Rabbi Yusef Seban is also a Saqali Cohen.

2. Ulad Morciano (originally of Murcia, in Spain), sub-divided into four family groups: Ulad ben Akku, Ulad el Kerchem, Ulad Mechtchon, Ulad Eachgar.

The Morciano and their dependents occupy forty dwellings and number one hundred heads of families. Their chief is David ben Akku Morciano, whose father received and entertained M. de Foucault.

3. Ulad ben Hamu, a unique group, counting about twenty heads of families. Their chief is Harun di Shmuil ben Hamu. This ancient group is of Moroccan origin.

4. Ulad ben Sussan, not a very numerous group, but very old and of native origin, numbers about

twelve families. Its head is Abraham ben Sussan. Among its members are the rabbi Massud and several other Talmudists of note.

5. Ulad ben Gigi, which came from the Sahara, counts some ten families.

6. Ulad Meralli: about four families. This group has almost completely emigrated.

The three last groups are under the authority of the head of the Morciano.

Altogether there are over three hundred Jewish heads of families, as compared with one hundred and sixty-five Mussulman heads of families.

The Jews of Debdu who have their homeland have this in common with the Jews of Jerba, that they never break away completely from their native place. The communal registers have a complete and accurate list of Jews of Debdu living in other places. This list shows that there are, scattered through Morocco and Algeria, at least as many natives of Debdu as there are in the city itself. The list is reproduced below:

Melilla	68 families
Fez	60 "
Tlemçen	29 "
Ujda	17 "
Martemprey	17 "
Tuarirt	15 "
Berguent	20 "
Temuchent	12 "
Seffru	9 "
Oran and Algiers	8 "
Nemours	8 "

Marnia	7	families
Rahal	7	"
Tangiers	5	"
Casablanca	3	"
Total	285	"

Several dozen families of Debdu are living to-day in Palestine, which means that more than three hundred families have left Debdu in the last generation. The grand total of the Jews of Debdu is therefore about six hundred families, or three thousand persons.

The rôle played in the earliest times by the Jews of the region of Debdu is, from the place it holds in popular tradition, too important to be omitted from a study of the Judaism of Debdu. We have seen that apart from the Judeo-Berber center of the Jerua, which was established about the year 695, several Jewish communities flourished before the twelfth century at Tlemçen, at Ceuta, at Fez and in the less important localities of the central Maghreb. The city of Debdu undoubtedly did not yet exist, and the Jewish groups of the district must then have inhabited Ujda, Taza and the *deshra* (villages), side by side with the Berbers. The traditions of the Jews speak of former settlements, which have now disappeared, at several points of the Jebel Beni Snassen and the Jebel Beni Bu-Zeggu; there was one settlement in the place where Taurirt now stands, and two settlements in the territory of the Beni Chulal (in the northeast of Debdu, beyond the Beni Snassen), where two ancient Jewish cemeteries may still be seen.

The Gada is nowhere mentioned in any written text antedating the Merinide dynasty, but it is certain that at that time (the fourteenth century) there were rabbis at Taza, and they were very influential in the district.[91]

In the thirteenth century the Almohad Sultan Mohammed seems to have erected a wall along the passes of the Riff to prevent the Jews from reaching the plains through the conquered country of northern Morocco.[92] Coming as it does from an orthodox Arab source, this statement is interesting. Additional confirmation of the persistence of the Jewish element in the Riff is found in a popular tradition current among the Berbers as well as among the Jews. In this connection it might be remembered that, according to rabbinic annals, Taza was the first Jewish community after Fez, organized immediately after the Jewish religion had been recognized by the Merinides. In the thirteenth century Taza produced, among other prominent rabbis, the learned Elhanan ben Maimon. In the "Teshubot Ha-Rashba" Solomon ben Abraham Adret, the great Spanish rabbi, speaks rather slightingly of these rabbis of Taza, no doubt with the purpose of establishing the superiority of the rabbis of Spain.

It is certain that it is not merely by chance that the first traditions of the Jews of the Gada of Debdu are connected with the settlement among the Beni Merin. If tradition speaks truly, the latter were at that time under the rule of the heroic Sultan Al Akhal (The

[91] Slouschz, "Etude," etc.

[92] "Rud el Kartas," Beaumier's translation.

Black Sultan), to whom are attributed the local ruins and the fragments of the stone barriers which must really have been the work of the Mussulmans. In the legends of the Jews of the whole of Atlas, as far as Tafilet, this Sultan Al-Akhal figures as a sort of local Charlemagne. Popular Jewish tradition connects him with the new epoch of Moroccan history.

M. Nehlil's theory is that the "Black Sultan" was really the Merinide Sultan Abu Yakub Yusef, who reigned at Fez from 1260 to 1307; we are entirely in agreement with this theory. Was it not this king who showed himself the protector of the Jews, even risking his life once to protect the Mellah at the time of a massacre?

To this period belongs the founding of the Abd-el-Wahid Sultanate of Tlemçen which, for many centuries, disputed with the Merinides the possession of the central Maghreb. The rivalry of these two dynasties, which only came to an end with the Turkish domination, was fought out in the regions of the Oranian Tell and in the plains of the lower Mulwiya. The valley of Debdu, partly because of the protection afforded it by the mountain and partly because of its location on the main route to the west, thus supplanted Taza and became, for more than two centuries, the chief center of the northeastern district of the Moroccan Atlas. It was also the capital of the little Berber kingdom which lasted until the fifteenth century.

The independence of Debdu came to an end with the Turkish invasion in the sixteenth century, and its greatness passed away with the power of the ruling

house; it sank back into obscurity, and its history is lost in the shadows which shroud the central districts of Morocco. Debdu played no part in the history of the Sherifian Empire; Leo Africanus, who lived at the time of this decline, knew "Dubdu" as one of the little capitals of Morocco; to Marmol Debdu was hardly known at all.

We have already noted that at the time of the Merinide ascendancy there were numbers of native Jews, originally from Morocco, in the regions of the lower Mulwiya. The two most important Jewish groups of Debdu claimed a Spanish origin. Not far from the cemetery there is a spring which bears the name Ain Sevilla, in memory of Seville, the ancient home of the Saqali Cohanim.

These Spanish Jews assert that they left Seville at the time of the Christian persecutions of 1391, and came to seek refuge in Debdu.[93] It is well known that these refugee Jews from Spain were received with open arms by the Merinide kings.

The Morciano came originally from Murcia, in Andalusia. The types of the Morciano and their traditions show a much stronger Berber strain than do the Saqali Cohanim; an authentic document states that at the end of the sixteenth century the former were established in the Kasba el-Makhzen.

The story of the ruin of the community of Seville, which was, so to speak, the aristocrat of Spanish Judaism, is well known in all its details. Many noble

[93] See my "Etude sur l'Histoire des Juifs au Maroc," Book IV.

and rabbinic families, foreseeing a renewal of the persecution, deemed it wisest to leave Spain and take refuge in the Barbary states. From this time onward we find in all the Jewish centers of Africa Spanish Jewish communities, whose scholars and rabbis soon became the leaders of African Jewry. From 1391 onwards, Tlemçen, Oran and Algiers became great rabbinic centers which exerted a powerful influence on the native Jews.

The towns of Fez and Marrakesh, which were not so well favored politically, played a secondary rôle during this period. There were even cases of several rabbis and families trying to settle in these towns and being forced to seek refuge in the more secure districts of the Atlas. This may have been the case with the Saqali Cohanim.

The Jewish cemetery of Debdu is some four centuries old. It is situated on the slope of the valley, to the left of the Mellah. The oldest of its stones are at the bottom of the slope and are covered with earth; a little higher up the slabs have been destroyed by the torrents which come down from the mountain. The only parts of the cemetery where the inscriptions on the tombstones are still legible are the middle and the higher, of which the latter contains the graves of the last generation. Of the older inscriptions which are still legible two date from the seventeenth century; they are in the middle part of the cemetery. Between the tombstones of the lower and those of the higher part of the cemetery there seems to be a difference of four or five centuries; and this fact is in agreement

with local tradition concerning the date of the settlement of Jews in this district.

The Saqali Cohanim claim, besides their Sevillian origin, which they prove in part by a document dating from the seventeenth century, another noble source; with the ancient clan of Aaronides of Gabes they pretend to be descended from a line of priests of the family of Zadok, of Jerusalem.[94] Their ethnic character, their manners, their superstitions in regard to Levites, which they share with the Cohanim of Jerba, their tendency to form separate groups round their synagogues, etc., all these are strongly reminiscent of the Aaronides of Africa. We may note here that the numerical value of the Hebrew transcription of the letters Sqli (סקלי) is the same as that of the letters composing the name Zadok in Hebrew, namely, 200. In their adoption of this name, Saqali, these Cohanim may have followed a cabalistic precedent, not infrequent in Morocco, of perpetuating their Zadokite origin in their later name.

However this may be, much of the history of the Saqali Cohanim and of Debdu remains unknown. This tribe finds no mention in any written documents antedating the seventeenth century. Their history is merged with that of Ibn Mechaal, the Jewish king of the Mulwiya, and of his Kasba Dar Ben Mechaal (shortened in the Jewish texts to Dar Mechaal).

Nothing would seem more surprising than the advent of a Jewish king in the ancient fief of Debdu at the very time when the Mussulman consciousness

[94] See my "Voyage d'Etudes Juives."

was in the process of its development. But to those who know well the position occupied by the Jews in the Berber countries the incident will not seem so astonishing. In this country, which was so hostile to the Mussulman element, the Jews formed an integral part of the native tribes; they took their full part in the social life of these tribes and fought side by side with their non-Mussulman neighbors. From the time of Leo Africanus there were many groups of Jewish warriors in the service of Berber overlords.[95] These were the last of the Jewish warriors of the Aures known to us.[96] Even in the district of Blad-el-Makhzen we hear twice of Jewish warriors fighting for their overlords of Fez.

On one occasion the Jewish vizier, Samuel Valense, led an army of 1,400 Mussulmans and Jewish warriors against the enemies of his overlord, the Merinide king of Fez.[97] On another occasion an army of 3,000 Jews went out to repulse the Berbers from the capital of the Saadian Sherifs.[98] Even to-day the traveller is astonished to meet among the Jews of Atlas and of the Sahara groups of splendid horsemen.

At the time of the taking of the fort of Sehnaga (Figig) by the French (1903) the Berbers would have forced the subject Jews to fight against the invaders, but many of them preferred to leave their homes, and

[95] Ibid, vol, IV, pp. 147, 151, 156, etc.
[96] Col. Lartigue, "Monographie sur l'Aures."
[97] Graetz, "History of the Jews," German ed., vol. IX, p. 15.
[98] See my "Etude sur l'Histoire des Juifs au Maroc," Book IV.

to this day they have not returned to their native country.

These examples of the importance of the Jews will make us understand how, in a province far removed from the central authority of the empire, among a population not properly Islamized, and at a time of political unrest which has been called by Arab writers, "The Forty Years of Trouble," a Jew was able to rise to power.[99]

The period of which we speak belongs to the middle of the seventeenth century. The Marabuts of the Zawya of Dila were stirring up the country, and the Saadian monarch Mohammed esh-Sheik was threatened in his very capital. Rebellious peoples overran the country of Ujda as far as Furthest-Sus.

The Turks in power at Ujda only made the troubles worse by the establishment of little local tyrants, whose one aim in ruling the people was the satisfaction of their own rapacity and greed.

The Moroccans rose against this foreign rule. The family of the Hassan Shurefa took advantage of this rebellion, and Mulay Mohammed proclaimed him-

[99] Besides works previously quoted I have consulted the following writings: "Nozhat el Hadi," or the "History of the Saadian Dynasty," by Mohammed el Ufrani, translation of O. Houdas; "Morocco from 1631 to 1812," by Abulqasim ben Ahmed Ezziani, translation of O. Houdas; the above mentioned Jewish chronicle of Fez, in manuscript; the responsa משפט וצדקה ביעקב (ed. B. Bensimon); and the book of M. Toledano, which contains many details concerning the rabbis of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but which is not well substantiated in most of its other statements.

self king of Sijilmasa, marched toward the north, and seized Angad, the Arab population of which rallied to his cause. Later on Mulay er-Reshid repeated the exploits of his brother. He went to Taza, found a group of partisans and also sought to establish himself.

The Arabian writer El-Ufrani, a contemporary of these events, tells the story as follows (work mentioned above, page 407, note 99):

"Mulay er-Reshid fled to Sijilmasa (for fear of his brother) and, passing from city to city, sought to seize the royal power. These wanderings brought him to the Kasba of Ibn Mechaal. There he found a poll-tax-paying Jew who was tremendously rich and who oppressed the Mussulmans and laughed at Islam and its believers. For a long time Mulay er-Reshid sought to lure this Jew into some ambush; and at last God granted him the opportunity, after a long series of events which we cannot here repeat. Mulay er-Reshid killed the Jew, seized his riches and distributed them among those who had joined and followed him. His forces increased, and his fame became great, and was carried afar by the caravans."

A century later Chenier, a French writer who was well acquainted with the later history of Morocco, wrote[100] as follows of these incidents:

"Mulay er-Reshid then went to a district which was called the Mountain of the Jew because a Jew was in power there, to whose laws the Berbers had submitted themselves, and whom they treated as their king.

[100] Chenier, "Recherches sur les Maures," vol III, p. 345.

Having fomented trouble and sedition in the country, he had the Jew put to death as being unworthy to rule over Mussulmans; he seized his wealth and remunerated his troups."

We may recall here that among the Beni Zekara, close to Tisni, there is a mountain called the "Mountain of the Jew," and by its side there is a spring and a cemetery to which the same name is given. From this indication we might place the site of the Dar Mechaal somewhere between Taurirt and Angad.

I have in my possession some Jewish manuscripts in which there is to be found an account of these events:

"In the year 5425 (1661-1666) Mulay Ali esh-Sherif went from Tafilet to Sus. He was a pretender to the throne. But he was thrown into prison by Admimi, governor of Sus, who gave him for company a negro servant woman. Of their union was born Mulay Ismail, who was to be king later. But some time before Mulay er-Reshid, the older son of Mulay esh-Sherif, left Tafilet and went to Taza, where, on a Sabbath day, he treacherously murdered the Jew Aaron ben Mechaal, who was reigning there as king. From Taza Mulay er-Reshid went to Fez, and they opened before him the gate Bab el-Buzet. That night he slept in the Mellah. In the morning they opened before him the Bab es-Samrin of Fez-el-Jedid."

Brief as the treatment of the subject is, it is not lacking in interest. In the first place it confirms the statements of the non-Jewish writers, and adds a number of interesting details, giving the first name of

the Jew Ben Mechaal; and then it explains why El-Ufrani is silent on the subject of the manner of the capture of the Jewish chief by Mulay er-Reshid. The Mussulman author, feeling somewhat uncomfortable, simply says that "the series of events would be too long to repeat here"; the Jewish chronicler is not troubled by the actual fact, and he gives us the oft-repeated spectacle of a Jewish chief who falls because of his scrupulous observance of the Sabbath rest.

And yet we do not find that the Berbers, the Zekara and the Beni Snassen, among whom these incidents took place, were at all pleased with the change; on the contrary, the disappearance of the Jewish monarch was to them a source of keen regret. We find that after the murder of Ben Mechaal the Berbers refused to rally to Mulay er-Reshid, and seem instead to have allied themselves with the Arab elements; the bitter resistance of the city of Taza to the Sherif invader is sufficient indication of the feelings of the populace. And this fact might well explain another incident: thirty years after the death of Ben Mechaal we find Mulay Ismail, who was generally well disposed towards the Jews, expelling, for some unknown reason, the inhabitants of the Kasba Ibn Mechaal; the Kasba itself he razed to the ground so that not one stone rested upon another; so complete was the destruction that to-day it is difficult to locate the very site of the building. Popular tradition places it near Angad, between the Jebel Beni Snassen and the Beni Zekara, in a district where, near the mountain of Meqam, there is to-day a duar Ibn Mechaal. The Mountain

of the Jew is also in the country of the Zekara. In addition may be mentioned that among the Ahel Togma of the Beni Snassen there are the tents of the Ulad ben Mechaal, who lived at one time among the Beni Bu Abdissied. According to Voinot,[101] these are the descendants of the Jew Mechaal who, according to local tradition, ruled at one time the entire Beni Snassen.

The name Ben Mechaal is borne in our own times by a highly respected Jewish family whose head, Moses Ibn Mechaal, lives in the locality of Tuzret in the Glawi of Marrakesh. We are told that several Jews of Fez also bear this name.

Certain traditions, and in particular those of the Jews of Taza, place the site of Dar Mechaal near the latter city. In support of this claim, according to a native of Taza, is the fact that near the city there is a stone house which is attributed to Ibn Mechaal. On the other hand, the latter may well have possessed a house in Taza, which was his native city.

In the popular legends of the Beni Snassen the rôle of Ibn Mechaal has been somewhat changed. M. Voinot, who carried on his inquiries at first hand, has written as follows on this subject:

"According to local traditions there were once many Jews among the Beni Snassen; they were attached to the Beni bu Abdissied (a branch of the Beni Urinieche) and their houses were located in the various *deshra* of this clan. From these they were expelled when the power of the *soff* of the Beni bu Abdissied declined,

[101] "Oudjda et son Amalat," p. 288.

after a defeat inflicted by the other mountain tribes; Ibn Mechaal was one of the Jews of the Beni Abdissied; he possessed a Kasba, and his immense riches had given him so great an authority that he came to rule the Mussulmans of the Beni Snassen like a real king.

"One day as he was going along the road he met a woman with a child, and asked her to give him a drink. When the woman refused, Ibn Mechaal seized the child and slew it with his sword. The unhappy mother carried the body and the severed limbs of the little victim to the Ulad Ibrahim and the Ruma, and demanded vengeance. These two tribes, who lived in the north between Segzel and Tasaghine, were the most powerful of the district; their warriors went out against Ibn Mechaal, and after a few days slew him at Sus el-Had of the Beni Ammid."

This childish legend finds some sort of support in the festival of the *Tolbas* (scholars) of Fez, which is mentioned by M. Henri Gaillard in his excellent book on Fez. This festival, which is called the Festival of the Sultan of the *Tolbas*, is celebrated in the spring, and commemorates the time of the rule of Ibn Mechaal. The legend says that Ibn Mechaal, who ruled at Taza, had the audacity to demand from the citizens of Fez, as an annual *hedia*, or customary present, the most beautiful girl in the city. At this time Mulay er-Reshid was studying at Fez. Implored by a Sherifa whose daughter had been designated that year for Ibn Mechaal, Mulay er-Reshid, who was still a beardless boy, dressed himself as a woman and took the place

of the girl. He was then sent to the palace of the tyrant and took with him forty coffers of ornaments, in each of which was concealed a *Tolba*. The Jewish king received the pretended girl with great joy, but when the coffers were opened, the forty *Tolbas* leapt out and killed Ibn Mechaal. In commemoration of this deliverance of Morocco from the yoke of a Jew the students of Fez hold an annual carnival, at which one of them is chosen Sultan.

The legend is not altogether without historic confirmation. This instance of the domination of a Jewish family is not unique in the history of the Jewish settlements of Dades and of Tililit in this district; we shall see later on how an important Spanish family rose to power and created an almost autonomous fief, which existed for several generations.

And as for Ibn Mechaal, was he of the family of the Saqali Cohanim? And if so, was he its head? Was he partly of a Berber tribe? It is difficult to answer these questions. The Saqali Cohanim, among whom I made investigations at Debdu on this subject, have no special memorials of Ibn Mechaal, and they do not recognize in him one of their number. The heads of Debdu wrote me as follows in this connection: "We have heard tell that at one time there was a king at Taza by the name of Ben Mechaal, who reigned for more than ten years and was killed by the Arabs." However this may be, we find in the history of the Jewish settlement of the time of Ibn Mechaal several mentions of members of the family of the Saqali

Cohanim. After the death of Ibn Mechaal these must have returned to their former homes in Debdu, and, indeed, the return of the Saqali Cohanim caused that conflict with which the written history of the community of Debdu begins.

CHAPTER V

HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF DEBDU

When the Dar Mechaal was destroyed Debdu became again the center of Jewish activity. The Saqali Cohanim who were expelled from the Kasba were followed to Debdu by their neighbors of the Dar Mechaal, the Morciano and the Beni Naim. (The Beni Naim have since disappeared from Debdu.) In their new home the Morciano and the Beni Naim refused to occupy the secondary position which had been theirs in the Dar Mechaal. The ensuing dissensions hinged chiefly on the question of precedence in the synagogue and on preference in positions of public charges, and they have continued till our own day. There is continuous squabbling in the city, and, as the Saqali Cohanim generally got the worst of it, they appealed once to the rabbinic tribunal of Fez at the time when it was presided over by the rabbis Judah Ibn Atta, Abraham Ibn Danan and Jacob Abesur.

Luckily a collection of the acts of the rabbinic tribunal of Fez still contains the minutes of two disputes between a rabbi of Debdu and the rabbis of Fez; this document throws light not merely on the ethnic nature of the community of Debdu, but also on the character of the Jewish population of the Dar

Mechaal at the time of the domination of Aaron Ibn Mechaal.

The two documents, which are written in Hebrew mixed with Arabic, date from the year 1719. The more important of the two was written by Joseph Ben Shimon Saqali Cohen. Speaking of a quarrel in the city of Debdu, he takes occasion to repeat the history of the settlement of the Saqali and the Morciano at Dar Mechaal. Extracts from this history follow:[102]

"To the perfect Rabbis, to the distinguished judges . . . from the humble one who prays that peace may be granted you, Amen.

"The cause of the affliction which overwhelms me because of my many sins is matter for the honor of your wisdom. And I call you to me, I implore you in the ten languages of prayer and supplication that you may give me the deciding answer to the question which I address to the dignity of your wisdom.

"Know, first of all, my masters, that it is nearly a hundred years since our ancestors left the city of Debdu. With them went my father, who was then still small (may his soul be gathered up in the garden of life!). He settled at Dar Mechaal, and in his house was always the synagogue to which the community came for prayer. My elder brother, Rabbi Judah Cohen, who still lives, and who is now seventy-seven years old, made it his profession to teach the Law in the synagogue of my father (of blessed memory)

[102] The work was published under the title משפט וצדקה ביעקב. It is now in the possession of the Rabbis of Debdu.

in Dar Mechaal. After him my younger brother Rabbi Moses Cohen (may God grant him life) taught the Law in the same synagogue; and then my third brother, rabbi Solomon Cohen (may his soul be gathered up in the garden of life), taught in the house of my father at Dar Mechaal. Then, in (5)450 (1690 of the common era) we were forced—God guard us from such evil—by a mandate of the king—may his majesty increase—to leave for the city of Debdu—may God protect it. From the day of our arrival at Debdu, for thirteen or fourteen years, we occupied the synagogue; from then on and for the rest of the time (?)[102a] I was filled with zeal, and we taught (the Law) to the Beni Morciano, to the fathers as well as to the children and the grandchildren.

"Nevertheless, our synagogue does not bear our name any longer, though the sages (blessed be their memory) have said: 'Sacred things shall be made to rise (by degrees) to holiness, but they shall never be made to sink.' But they (the Morciano and their allies) have done the opposite of that which the Talmud enjoins.

"My brother Moses has always been the public messenger (officiating minister) of the synagogue, while they declare: 'we have a legal statement given

[102a] From 1690 to 1719, which is 29 years. The text is somewhat obscure here and the meaning is uncertain. The Saqali seem to have occupied the synagogue without opposition during the first thirteen or fourteen years after their return from the Dar Mechaal. The Palestinian author who, here as elsewhere, is wrong in his details, did not give the text, which we reproduce here.

by rabbi Judah (may his light shine) (the elder brother of the writer) which says that one half of the synagogue belongs to the Beni Morciano and the other to the Beni Ben-Naim.'

"And now I will tell you of the origins of this synagogue. Our fathers have told us that it was in this synagogue that our ancestors prayed from the time that Debdu was peopled (literally, inhabited), but that the Beni Morciano are in reality from the district called Tasidlat, which is Kasba el Makhzen. But we (the Saqali Cohanim) come from the synagogue of Seville, and the said synagogue, which is the very one of Seville (?),[102b] is in the Jewish quarter; on the southern side it touches the yard of the son of Samuel ben Naim; on the western side the yard of Simon Cohen, surnamed the Saqali, and on the north the synagogue gives on the public place. Now when we returned from the Dar Mechaal, the nations of the earth (the non-Jews) oppressed us with their tyranny, and refused to permit us to rebuild the synagogue which had existed from the time of our ancestors. Then rose the son of Samuel ben Naim and declared to those of our community:

"'Let us set valiantly to work; let us build the synagogue, which at one time rose into the air (was suspended on columns?), but to-day we will build it on firm earth, for the soil is sacred to the community, so that no one will be able to claim the sole proprietorship; let it be a common possession.'

[102b] An obscure phrase, which would make it appear at first sight that the actual synagogue had been brought away from Seville.

"Then rose four of the chiefs of the community of Dar Mechaal; they armed themselves with courage and God came to their help. Here are their names: Solomon ben Isaac Morciano (his rest be in Eden), Rabbi Mordecai, brother of Rabbi Solomon son of Simon Cohen surnamed Saqali (his rest be in Eden), Rabbi Moses, son of Solomon Morciano (God grant him life), Rabbi David, son of David Morciano (God grant him life).

"They bought the good will of the great ones among the non-Jews of this city (Debdu) and of another city (without doubt Taza); these permitted them to construct the synagogue, and thus it was finished—God be praised for it—in the year (5)453 (that is, in 1693, three years after the expulsion of the Jews from the Dar Mechaal)."

This document gives in a clear fashion the history of the beginnings of the community of Debdu, which sometimes preceded and sometimes followed the community of Dar Mechaal. It appears from the document that the Saqali Cohanim lived at Debdu before the construction of the Dar Mechaal; that at a certain moment the city of Debdu ceased to be inhabited, and that the Jews, chief among whom were the Saqali Cohanim, went to establish themselves at Dar Mechaal. This must have taken place in the first quarter of the sixteenth century if we are to judge from the statements in the document which, written in 1719, refers back a century to the settlement in the Dar Mechaal. At Dar Mechaal, which became, under the domination of Aaron ben Mechaal, the center of

commerce between Angad and Taza, the Saqali Cohanim found themselves in the midst of an unlettered Jewish population, possessing neither synagogues nor schools. Of this population the Ulad Morciano, who had come from Kasba el Makhzen, formed even then a considerable part; in fact, of the four members of the ancient communal council of Dar Mechaal, three were Morciano and one was a Saqali Cohen. There was also at Dar Mechaal a clan of Beni Naim, which has since disappeared, and several other families whose descendants still live at Debdu.

It is very evident that under the rule of the Jewish chief the community at Dar Mechaal attained a high degree of prosperity; there were then lacking neither schools nor synagogues. Those of the faithful who had lived there before the arrival of the Saqali Cohanim had been wont to pray in the fields, a fact which leads us to believe that they were in reality Judeo-Berber.

Very soon Simon Saqali, animated by the zeal of the Spanish rabbis, who surmounted every difficulty in their determination to establish rabbinic rites and the study of the Law in Judeo-Berber centers, undertook to build a synagogue at Dar Mechaal, while his three sons, Judah, Moses and Solomon, founded religious schools for the young.

When the Jews were expelled from Dar Mechaal by Mulay Ismail, the Saqali family returned to Debdu, followed by its neighbors, the Morciano and the Beni Naim, who refused to recognize the rights of priority

which the Saqali claimed as the former owners of the Mellah.

The plaintiff, Joseph, who was the youngest son of Simon Saqali, invokes the noble Sevillian origin of the family, and the religious rôles played by his father and his brothers at Dar Mechaal, and finally points out that the Morciano were themselves intruders at Debdu. At one time, he says, this family dwelt at Tasidlat, the Kasba el Makhzen of our times.

From the document we may see that the dispute centered mainly on certain rights pertaining to the synagogue which was built in 1693, that is to say, three years after the return of the Saqali to Debdu (in the year 5453).

Despite the conciliatory spirit of the sentence pronounced by the rabbinic tribunal of Fez, the quarrel has gone on till this very day, and still plays an important part in the social life of the Jews of Morocco.

By an extraordinary piece of good luck we found, among the epitaphs still legible in the Jewish cemetery of Debdu, the actual stele of the writer of the document:

Year	1 שנת
5484 of the creation of the world (1724)	2 התפ"ד לב"ע
the learned rabbi	3 החכם רבי
Joseph the son of Simon	4 יוסף בן שמעון
Saqali Cohen	5 כהן סקלי

Joseph Cohen Saqali, one of those who returned from Dar Mechaal, died in 1724.

Another partly legible stone, which seems to be older than the one quoted, yields nothing more than the name Jacob and the date (54) 5(2) = 1692.

We know very little concerning the community of Debdu during the eighteenth century except that during the first half of it the Jewish population increased tremendously. Local tradition says that at this time the Mellah stretched along the valley as far as the river. In 1726 Debdu was one of the twenty-six Moroccan communities possessing rabbinic tribunals, like Taza and Beni Riata. The city is mentioned as Debdu, the city on the "river" Bu Dubut.[103] In 1745 a plague decimated the Jewish population of the city. In the Jewish cemetery may still be seen a stretch of graves which contain the victims of this calamity.

Details on the later history of Debdu are lacking. The only thing we really know of the life of the city is the struggle between the Cohanim and the common people, which is mentioned by R. Moses Edrehi (1780). Concerning their more recent history, we know that the Jews of Debdu were under the direct authority of the Makhzen, to whom they sent a regular annual levy through the Pasha of Fez. In time of trouble the Jews went for protection to the *Seyyids* or tribal chiefs of the locality. Moses Edrehi, a Jewish Moroccan author who wrote in English, gives us some curious details in this connection. Writing of the eighteenth century, he lays particular stress on

[103] Pointed out for the first time by M. Moise Schwab; confirmed by the author and by M. L. Massignon. See above mentioned work, p. 159.

the division of the Jews into Cohanim and common Israelites, and on the exclusion of Levites from Debdu. There has been little change since then.

The last great king of Morocco, Mulay Hassan (1875-1894), did away with the protection of the Jews by the *Seyyid*, and took them under his own direct authority, separating them from the rest of the city for administrative purposes.

The Mussulman population was ruled by Amel, governor of Taza, while the Jews were placed, through the intermediation of a Sheik chosen by themselves, under the authority of Basha Bu Mohammed of Fez.

It seems that the measures taken by Mulay Hassan in favor of the Jews were the result of increasing cases of murder. Thus we find that in 1875 the tribes of the surrounding country invaded the Mellah and massacred twenty Jews. In 1877 four Jews of Debdu, three belonging to the Ulad Morciano and one to the Ulad ben Sussan, were assassinated under the following circumstances:[104]

The four men, who were partners in business, left the city on horseback on the nineteenth of August, taking with them 92,000 francs for the purchase of merchandize. Five days later the bodies of the four merchants were found between Ujda and Marnia; they had been murdered and robbed. The arrival of the riderless horses in the city gave the alarm, and the searching party which was organized found the bodies riddled with bullets and slashed with knife

[104] Bulletin of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1877.

wounds. In the clenched hand of one of the Morciano was found a scrap of paper with these words: "We are attacked by the tribe of the Ghizha (Ria?)."

Despite the complaints of the relatives of the victims, no attempt was made to bring the murderers to justice—even as no attempt was made to punish the murderers of the twenty Jews of Debdu in 1875. When, however, it was discovered that one of the victims had been a French subject, the Alliance Israélite and the Central Consistory intervened to see that justice was done.

In 1884 Debdu was visited by M. Foucault, a French Catholic, who travelled through this country in the disguise of a rabbi—a fact which did not prevent him from slandering the Jews in his important book of travels. The reader has seen part of the narrative of this traveller and his description of the Jews, who still remember well his visit. He was the guest of the Morciano who, though they soon recognized him as a Christian, treated him with lavish hospitality. After their treatment of him, they certainly did not expect to read his savage and prejudiced criticism of the Jews of Morocco. Moreover, their hospitality came near costing them dear. For the tribes of the district, learning that the Jews had given shelter to a Christian traveller, gathered together and came to Debdu to punish the community. Only the diplomacy of certain chiefs of the community and the payment of a heavy fine averted the peril. But the resentment of the Mussulman population never died down, and in 1885 the Mussulman tribes,

on some pretext or other, invaded the Mellah, massacring the inhabitants and pillaging the houses.[105]

But the hosts of M. de Foucault seemed to bear him no grudge. After the French occupation, David Morciano, the chief of the Ulad Morciano, gracefully informed the celebrated explorer of his continued friendliness. On his return, M. de Foucault wrote a letter in Arabic from some spot in central Sahara to his former hosts. I have here a copy of the letter, drawn up for me by the Arab bureau of Ujda.[106]

"Monsieur David de Mouche Morciano ben Haco: From Captain Ouanon, of the Arab bureau. Ujda.[107]

"I send you greeting. I learn that the letter which you sent to M. de Foucault reached him and that he was pleased; when he was at your house he knew your writing, but to-day he has forgotten it, and he has for this reason charged me with the duty of replying to you. He remembers you and has not forgotten you; he was pleased that you thought of him and remembers well his sojourn among you. He says that he will never forget you, neither you nor your amiable family. He thanks God that he knew you during his sojourn in Morocco, at a time when he was unhappy and had not enough to eat; when he was dying of hunger, you saved him from death and treated him as one of your own sons. All the good which you did to him he still bears in mind. And for these reasons

[105] Ibid, 1886.

[106] The letter reached Debdu in April, 1912.

[107] M. Voinot, through whom the letter reached its destination.

he was glad to receive your letter and to learn that you are all well.

"Greetings from me, Captain Ouanon (M. Voinot) of the Arab Bureau of Ujda."

The tranquillity which characterized the reign of Mulay Hassan lasted only a few years. Since 1902, the date of the uprising of Bu Hamara, northeastern Morocco has been in a constant state of agitation.

Caravans have feared to set out across the country because of the robbers who haunted the great routes. Commerce and industry were threatened, and many Jews have left Debdu and settled in the towns of Oran and in Mediterranean Morocco. Generally in comfortable circumstances, they have been forced since 1897 to appeal for help, through the citizens of Fez, to their French coreligionists.[108]

We have already seen that after the disappearance of Bu Hamara, his lieutenant Bu Hacita proclaimed himself the independent head of the entire region of Debdu, but that he soon dropped these claims, preferring to submit to the Pretender. In offering submission for himself he brought with him his dependents, among them David Saqali (whom the Arabs call Dudu Benhida Cuhana), the Sheik of the Saqali Cohanim.

This David Saqali had rendered great services to Roghi, and the latter conferred upon him the title Sheik of all the Jews of Debdu, to the great exasperation of the Ulad Morciano.

[108] Bulletin of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1897.

Later on, when the Pretender saw how the Mussulmans were defecting from his cause in greater and ever greater numbers, he named David Saqali Cohen Kaid of the whole region of the Debdu. Thus we see, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a Jew invested with power over a Moroccan city. And who knows whether, under proper circumstances, David Saqali would not have been able to repeat the history of Ibn Mechaal!

At first Roghi contented himself with a small annual levy from the Jews. But, embittered by adversity and the depletion of his money he resorted later to violent methods of extorting money from them. On some meaningless pretext, he imprisoned ten Jews and confiscated their possessions. A panic seized on the wealthier Jews. The Morciano had already had cause to complain to the tribunals of Fez and Jerusalem of the tyranny of the Jewish governor. (Their first complaint was occasioned in connection with a shop which David Cohen established at the very entrance to the quarter of the Morciano.) But it must be borne in mind that the stories which circulate through the country of the tyranny of the Jewish governor contain many exaggerations. They took advantage of a defeat suffered by Roghi, about whom they were probably less concerned than about his Jewish henchman, to proclaim Mulay Hafid Sultan; this meant, of course, the fall of David Saqali, their hereditary enemy.

But it must be said that this action of the Jews of Debdu was in part caused by the events which took

place near by, in Taza, under the impotent and unpopular rule of Abd el-Aziz, and which might have been repeated at the former city. After having taken the city from Roghi, the *Mehalla* of the reigning Sultan threw itself on the Jewish community and exterminated it. Forty men were killed, many women were violated, children were led into captivity, and the houses were stripped. The survivors fled into the mountains and, thanks to the help of the Berber chiefs, succeeded in reaching the city of Melilla. Another group, which fled to Fez, was smitten by disease while on the road and was decimated. Other fugitives from Taza fled to Ujda and to Debdu. No Jews can be met with to-day in Taza except at stated seasons, when the Jews of the two villages of the Riff come to the city market or meet for prayer over the graves of the dead saints.

These disturbances continued until the French occupation, and in 1910 the agent of the Alliance Israélite wrote as follows from Ujda:

"For a long time the region of Debdu has been in a continued state of anarchy, and our coreligionists have been the butt of the struggles between the tribes. Some time ago a European who was passing through Debdu, where he was sheltered by a Jew, was assassinated by the men of a neighboring tribe; an Arab chief who accompanied him was also murdered. The death of this native chief, who was very influential in the district, was visited on the Jews. The partisans of this chief, Ulad Hannu, that is the Ulad Amora (the Amieux), descended on Debdu itself. In the struggle

four Jews were killed, two of them women, and twenty houses were pillaged and burned down. The Jewish quarter was closed for eight days, and no water could be carried into it. The Jews had to quench their thirst on the snow which had fallen. It is unnecessary to speak of the numerous attacks made by the Mussulmans on women and girls."

The Central Committee of the Alliance Israélite made these events the basis of a plea to the French Legation at Tangiers for the protection of the Jews of Debdu, and the latter repeatedly asked that the country be occupied by the French.

The military governor of Ujda could not, apart from any humanitarian considerations, let the murder of a Frenchman by the rebellious tribes of the Gada go unpunished. The occupation of the region was decided on. In the spring of 1911 General Lyautey, the military governor, sent a column from Taurirt to Debdu, and a military post was established half way up the hill which dominates the city. The natives offered only a passive resistance. But later, a company of legionaries, caught in one of the mists which frequently cover the valley, was surprised by a band of rebels who came down from the mountain, and thirty-one French soldiers were killed.

I have it from Captain Canevy that when the occupation was proclaimed, the only official personage who came to greet the French authorities in the name of the peaceful population was our old friend David Saqali Cohen. And thus there begins for the Jews of Debdu a new era; from now on their destinies will be linked with the future of French civilization in Africa.

CHAPTER VI

CUSTOMS OF THE JEWS OF MOROCCO[109]

Since each individual group has its peculiar customs and superstitions, it is impossible to give a general survey of the manner of life of the Jews of Morocco. In regard to those of the interior, our investigations are not yet completed—and it must suffice to say that their beliefs have often a polytheistic character which approaches fetichism. There are still some who worship grottoes, rocks and streams under the guise of saints. Even in the parts where there are still Spanish Jews, as in Tetuan where the Spanish rabbis still dominate the life of the community, the life of the Jew is bound up with all sorts of ancient beliefs and superstitions, which he has taken over from the Berbers and Arabs, and which have become an essential part of his existence.

The Jew of the Moroccan coast represents a fine Mediterranean type. He speaks an Arab dialect peculiar to himself, but there are many Jews who have a knowledge of Hebrew, more than in any other part of Africa. At Fez and in Morocco I had large audiences who understood me when I spoke in Hebrew.

[109] In addition to my own observations, I have made use of the writings of Ben Chimol (Revue des Ecoles) and of Toledano, in Hebrew.

The Jews of Morocco have a peculiar way of articulating the Hebrew letters. The letters ס, צ, ש are pronounced like a soft *s* slightly sibilated, the ת is pronounced somewhat like a soft English *th*. The ע is pronounced like an Oriental ע. The weak ג is pronounced somewhat like a ח. They have a special way of writing Hebrew. The vowels are not always pronounced. The whole matter is of great interest to the student of modern Hebrew vocalization.

It is a general custom among the Jews of Morocco to shave the head, but they allow the two earlocks or *peot* to grow. In the Atlas they also leave a small tuft of hair in the center of the head, and in the Dra'a region they have a lock of hair falling over the temple, between the eyes, in commemoration, they say, of the destruction of Jerusalem. Their favorite dish is *cus-cus*, and they are very fond of meat.

The Jews dominate local commerce, and they form an indispensable link between the coast towns and the interior, but they are above all artisans, as they have been from the earliest times: goldsmiths who go throughout the country working in copper and precious metals, cobblers, tailors, weavers and embroiderers, some of whom are attached to the court of the Sultan and some to other native chiefs. In the south there are smiths among the Jews. They also manufacture *mahia*, which they sell in secret to the Mussulmans and drink to excess themselves. This illicit trade, like that of usury, often gets them into trouble with the natives. In the interior there are many agricultural groups; in some parts of the country they

manufacture arms, and in the Atlas there are warrior Jews who wield them.

To sum up, the professions of the Jews of the interior are the same that Leo Africanus ascribed to them in the descriptions of his travels among them in the fifteenth century.

The frequent cases of violation of women and the extreme poverty among the Jews have given rise to a prostitute class among them. In the eighteenth century, it is recorded that there were forty of these women in Mogador living with Mussulman protectors, with whom they were sharing their earnings. In Casablanca these women are buried apart in a corner near the walls. Here I read the epitaph of such a woman—"Ha-Ishah ha-Zenuah" (the "modest" woman), X daughter of Y. In Fez there are Jewish singers and dancers, as well as Jewish musicians. The Jewish dancing woman is known as *Scicha*. Child-marriages are the ruin of these backward regions. It is by no means rare in Morocco to encounter married couples aged seven or eight years. Polygamy is rare and the wife can always demand that the husband swear not to take another wife. However, I have met men with three or four wives, even among the rabbis and other men of prominence in the community. Divorce is very easy for the husband.

In Morocco, at Fez and the coast towns, there is a Jewish aristocracy who trace back their descent for centuries and take great pride in their genealogical trees. Thus, the Ezra family in Tafilet reckons twenty-eight generations, and many of the other

families trace their descent to Spanish exiles or to distinguished rabbis. The Ibn Danan family trace their lineage back twenty generations: the Serfati and the Abenzur, fifteen generations; the Toledano, twelve, etc. The genealogical tree is written in the marriage contract (ketubah) and read aloud by the officiating rabbi.

Like the tribe of the Saqali Cohanim in Debdu, the Aaronides keep in distinct groups, such as the Cohen el-Calaz, the Cohen el-Hadad, the Cohen Samnano, the Cohen Ben Naim-Nehorai, and then the two clans known as the "profaned" Cohanim. There are also Levites who are divided into seven or eight clans. Among the Berbers there are neither Cohanim nor Levites. We have noted the same phenomenon among the desert Jews of Tripoli and Algiers.

Religious ceremonial is much the same as among other Sephardic Jews. The Kiddush on Passover, however, among the Jews of Tafilet, differs from the Sephardic, and its text resembles that used among the Jews of Jerba.

A custom peculiar to the African Jews consists in placing on the first evening of Passover some fish, preferably living, on a plate and taking one, that of the "Seder," and turning it about the heads of those present at the ceremony, saying, "We have gone forth in haste from Egypt." Then, after the reading of the Haggadah, the men take a staff in their hands and a pack on their back and rush into the street, crying, "Thus did our ancestors go forth from Egypt in haste, their packs on their backs." The evening after Pass-

over is the feast of Maimuna, which we have already had occasion to observe among the Jews of Algeria. During the day they go out into the woods and say a prayer called "The Blessing of the Trees." During the Feast of Weeks they make a libation and sprinkle one another with water in the streets.

The birth of a child is marked by the same ceremonies that have been noted in other parts of Africa. In Tetuan, a woman greets a new born child with the Spanish magic word "Aburgualos" and places honey in its mouth. Mother and infant are surrounded by all sorts of magic precautions to ward off evil spirits.

On the Saturday preceding the circumcision, the father of the child is greeted at the synagogue by the same cry of "Aburgualos." He occupies the place of honor beneath a lamp in the form of the Shield of David. The *Hazzan* chants piyyutim in his honor, and afterwards the whole congregation accompanies him to his home where the Sabbath meal is spread—hard boiled eggs with pancakes, cakes and nuts. Those who remain, eat with the father the *adefina* or *shalet*, consisting of hard-boiled eggs, potatoes and meat, and afterwards the *oriza*, or rice-pudding, a sort of *kuggel*. The eve of the *Berit Milah* is known in the north as *Talamo*. The guests say the *shema'*, dine, and then throw money into a handkerchief which a barber ties about the neck of the father. The father and the god-father are then shaved to the sound of piyyutim.

The door of the room where the mother and child are lying is surrounded by knives and amulets, and

once it is closed for the night it may not be opened till the morning. The ceremony itself does not differ from that in practice among the Jews of Europe.

The name-feast of the birth of a girl is called among the Spanish *Fados*. On Simhat Torah, the last day of Sukkot, the infant is carried into the synagogue, where it is brought up to the reading of the Law, while in its hands is held a candle in a flower-wreathed candelstick. The *Cirio Lentina* is a feast given at the first teething of an infant. An offering of wheat, beans and chick-peas is made.

The *tahfife* is a feast given at the first cutting of a child's hair. The *Payyetan* chants while sweet-meats are distributed among the children. The ceremony of initiation into the use of the *tefilin* resembles that in use among the Polish Jews. There is singing and speech-making, and the women shower bon-bons over the head of the youth, to the huge delight of all the children present. Among the Arab-speaking Jews of the south the customs resemble those of the Holy Land. There are many and varied ceremonies in connection with marriage. The parents play the part of *Shadchan* in arranging the union of the young people. They draw up the engagement contract (*tenaim*) and fix the date of the marriage often far in advance. The marriage festivities go on for three weeks. They commence on a Saturday known as *mais*. The following Monday the maiden sends a dish of fruit and the *tufera* or ribbon that binds her hair to her future mother-in-law. The latter prepares the *alfeha*, made

of onion, oil and honey, to be eaten eight days later on the eve of the marriage.

On Tuesday comes the *lavado primero*. The bride gives a feast to her young girl friends and receives a costume from her future husband. She remains in negligé until the day of the ceremony.

Bab-el-hors (the door of the marriage) is a ceremony which takes place at the home of the fiancé on the evening of the same day. The guests say prayers and then dine, after which they all arm themselves with candles and with broomsticks and go out into the streets, singing ancient Spanish and Arab melodies to the sound of a tambourine. The children cry *halale*, and their elders recite biblical blessings. Then they go to the homes of both families, where there is dancing. On the Thursday the ceremony of *tahfife*, or the cutting of the girl's hair, takes place. On Saturday is the *saftarrai*, when the bridegroom dines with his parents-in-law. On entering the house he kisses the mother's hand and she kisses him on both cheeks. Saturday is passed in rejoicing at the house of the bride. Towards evening the *novio* (bridegroom), dressed in carnival fashion, mounts on the shoulders of a friend, who leaps about with him while all the others strike him with handkerchiefs.

The Arabic-speaking Jews of the interior, on the Saturday night of the marriage week, celebrate the feast of *metqal*. The bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, all on horseback, gallops to the house of the *novia* or bride, accompanied by musicians. Here the girl, surrounded by her friends, awaits him con-

cealed behind a curtain, from which she stretches out her hands to receive the gifts which he brings. She then strikes the groom with a ring, and he places a jewel in her hand and runs away. On the following Sunday the marriage contract is drawn up and the trousseau verified, and in the evening a band of young men come for her, carrying lanterns, and carry her off in state. On Monday an ox is slaughtered for the feast. The young men then send the bride a costume, perfumes, *henna*, and white and scarlet paint, which she is to use on the following day. On the evening of the same day a banquet is given for women alone, at the house of the mother of the bride, who then begins her toilette. The women dance and sing and send to the home of the groom the *taifor*, a special dish for the women of his household. On Tuesday the friends of the young couple gather in a room where the ceremony (*huppah*) is to take place, decorate it with rugs and hangings, and erect a sort of nuptial daïs. Tuesday is also the *henna* day. The bride and her friends color their hands. In the evening the bride's face is painted white and scarlet, she dresses up, and a sort of crown is placed on her head. She then closes her eyes, which she may not open again until she comes to the house of her future husband. Then the father and father-in-law take her hands and, preceded by a man who holds her head erect, she is led through the streets surrounded by women. In the street great excitement reigns. Thus they reach their destination, where the bride is greeted by cries of "aburgualos!" The mother-in-law greets her, conducts her to the

nuptial daïs, and then everybody goes out, leaving the bride alone with her mother for the rest of the night. On Wednesday the religious ceremony takes place. The festivities continue until the next Thursday, which is called the "Day of the Fish," when a great banquet is given to all the friends of the bridal couple, and then every-day life is once more resumed.

There are many ceremonials in connection with the dead. In the Atlas there survives the ancient custom of placing cruses of water on the tomb. In all parts of Morocco there are to be found professional wailing women who, as in biblical times, are called in to weep for the dead; frequently these women rend their faces and their bodies in their exaltation.

If two men die in the same house in the same year, a rooster is slaughtered near the door of the house in order to propitiate the angel of death.

Sorcery, the wierdest medical practices, soothsaying, spells against the evil eye, magic and cabalistic formulas, all that speaks of ignorance and superstition, has a large part in the life of the Jew of Morocco. In addition to the *Baale Shem*, there exist sorcerers, both male and female, who go in for the most savage practices, survivals of paganism. These sorcerers are to be found even as far as Tunis.

But of prime importance is the cult of the dead. The whole Mellah and the Jewish cemeteries are filled with saints, real or imaginary, who bring salvation to those who worship them and damnation to those who neglect their cult. The living crowd the cemeteries and the grottoes, seeking among the hallowed tombs some

consolation in their misery, a cure for their maladies, and often merely distraction from the humdrum life of the Mellah.

When a Mellah has not the good fortune of either a real or an imaginary saint—at a pinch a madman will do for canonization after death—there will always be pious folks who will have visions in which they discover the tombs of saints which never existed, like that of Rabbi Nissim, which is found simultaneously in the region of Mogador and in the north; or that of Eliyahu, the Prophet Elijah (?), who is said to have made his appearance in a house in Baheira (the poor quarter of the Mellah of Casablanca).

About some tombs have formed legendary cycles of rare beauty. Such a tomb is the White House at Saffi, which rises on a hill facing the tombs of the seven brothers of Ben-Zemora. The legends surrounding this monument are filled with miracles of the cabalistic type prevalent in the latter centuries.

The name of Ben-Zemora is that of a rabbinic family of Spain. This number of seven saints is found again in the seven mysterious *mul* (saints) of the Atlas. This legend takes on an appearance of great antiquity, when one remembers that the town of Ceuta, according to a Phoenician legend, has its origin bound up with the history of the seven brothers.

CHAPTER VII

THE CITY OF MOROCCO

Morocco, a strange city with a strange name! What emotions awoke in me when I reached Mogador in the month of August, 1912, aboard the cruiser Cheyla, which came bringing deliverance to the Jews of the city, which was being threatened by fanatical tribes from the south; it was from Mogador, then occupied by the French, that I tried to penetrate into the interior with my friend Leon Corcos of Mogador and Nissim Coriat of Morocco.

At Rabat I was much concerned to hear that M. Maigret, an old-time companion of my oriental studies, and several other Frenchmen were in prison and threatened with death in this Morocco of mystery, where the fanatical saint el-Haiba and his blue-clad bands were ruling with a high hand; moreover, as a Jew, I was extremely anxious about the fate of the 18,000 Jews, which hung on the speedy action of the French troops. In this terrible crisis deliverance came, and thanks to the daring of General Lyautey, both French and Jewish captives were saved.

Of the city of Morocco, the great capital of the country, I shall say only a few words. It is the most individual and the most original of the cities of Africa. Situated in the midst of the vast plain of Tenseft, at the foot of the Atlas mountains, Morocco, with its

80,000 inhabitants, is rather a collection of Saharan *ksurs* than a city. Looking down on Morocco from the terrace of the palace of Bahia, one beholds a unique sight: walled-in houses of gray or red bricks, gray-green palm groves, the palace deep-set in gardens, and in the background the great tower of the *Kutubia*, the sacred place of all southern Morocco. And in the distance, sand and palm-trees—a real city of the desert.

There is more of Berber than of Arab in the population, with a strong admixture of negro blood; here one feels the real south, the real Mauretania. It is a city completely African in every detail, that lies stretched out beneath the blazing African sun.

One quarter of the city is always in an uproar, with its turbulent, noisy humanity. This is the Mellah, the largest in the country. It is distinct from the rest of the city, from which it is separated by a wall. At the entrance is the large market place, crowded with the booths of Jewish vendors, and this is the most animated spot in all Morocco. Like those in the rest of the city, the houses of the Mellah are built of bricks and present a wretched appearance. All the streets, save those about the market place, are extremely narrow. There are about six hundred houses in the Mellah, built in the Moorish style, with three stories. The section is so crowded that each dwelling must house several families. Often as many as ten families live together in one place, and this serves to explain the frequency of loose living among the Jews of this city.

The bulk of the population of the Mellah are natives of Morocco, but among them there are also several thousand who come from the mountain regions or from the southern Berber country, and who are known as Shleuh. The Jews of Morocco dress like the Jews of Fez, excepting that these people of the south wear a red or black cap in place of the blue kerchief with white spots affected by the others; they have long *peot*, and often are dressed in a *haik* or draped light garment. The women, who are extremely hard working, go with their faces uncovered.

The Jews of Morocco are very poor, and have to toil unmercifully to eke out a bare existence. The majority are artisans, but there are also many petty merchants among them.

The strangest superstitions and customs are prevalent among the Jews of the Mellah. Those connected with the cult of the dead are particularly astounding. Near the wall of the cemetery is the famous mound of filth, formed by the refuse which the Jews have thrown there through the centuries. The cemetery is small in area. The tombs are set one upon another in tiers. Among the tombs of the rabbis, the tomb of the sainted Hanina is a special goal for pilgrimages. The diseased come here in search of a cure from all corners of the town. The tomb is covered by a mound of white stones, or by a triangular prism built out to form a little alcove. Here is placed a marble tablet with the name of the deceased, and here are burned candles or oil lamps for the repose of the soul.

There are no proper synagogues in Morocco, and no Talmud Torahs that merit the name. The Kitab (*heder*), or schools, are in dirty, sordid rooms, where the master and the children are all seated on mats, in the midst of indescribable dirt. The Talmud is taught in a Yeshibah under the renowned rabbi Azar, but there are very few true scholars in Morocco, although there are gathered here the Jewish youths from all parts of the Atlas for instruction in the Law.

The only glimmer of light in this wretched life of the Mellah is brought by the schools of the Alliance and their present director, M. Danon, who has done much to ameliorate social and hygienic conditions. *Zedakah* (charity) is given out of the revenue obtained from the slaughter of meat and from rare gifts and legacies.

The Mellah of Morocco is completely of the middle ages, and is very closely analogous to those old-time ghettoes of Europe described by Dr. Philipson, which seem perpetuated in this one. The invasion by the "Blue Men" brought a climax of misery upon the Mellah, and the Jews endured all the suffering and humiliation that our ancestors had to bear in those ghettoes of former times.

The French occupation has put an end to this state of affairs, and a new era has opened for the Jews of Morocco. In September, 1913, I had the honor of opening the first social club of the Jewish youth of Morocco, former pupils of the Alliance Israélite. They were clad in European clothes and were extremely

eager to be admitted to the benefits of modern civilization. Other signs of a new and larger life are not lacking. The European war, however, has retarded the normal evolution which should follow upon emancipation.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM MOROCCO TO DEMNAT[110]

How times have changed for the better in the Moroccan Empire! A year ago I tried in vain to penetrate to the mysterious capital of the south to bear succor to my French compatriots and the whole Mellah, which was utterly at the mercy of the band of Blue Men. To-day not only am I in the curious city of Morocco, this center of Judaism in the south, but I am about to realize my long-cherished project of making a voyage of discovery through the Great Atlas, a journey which shall serve to complement my travels through the mountain regions of Tripoli and Algeria.

I have received much encouragement in my undertaking. General Lyautey, to whom I owe so much, has made this journey possible for me, and M. de Segonzac, the famous explorer, and the learned colonel Simon have also shown great interest in my plans. As to the natives, I have received from Sidi Madani el-Glawi, the supreme chief of the mountains, welcome coöperation, which will aid me throughout my whole projected journey. Finally, the leading Jews of the Mellah, Joshua Corcos the head of the Mellah, vice-consul Nissim Coriat, J. Perez and M. Danon, the director of the Alliance Israélite, have given me valuable assistance in the organization of my caravan.

[110] From my Diary en route, Morocco, August 1, 1913.

I thought it best to travel in the rôle of a Jewish scholar as I did in the Tripolitan Sahara, for my knowledge of Hebrew and of the customs of the country would not allow any doubt to enter into the minds of the natives, who are suspicious in the extreme. But since I could never hide the fact that I was a stranger, I was advised to dress as a rabbi of Jerusalem, the only sort of stranger who is tolerated among the natives of the interior. In my letters of introduction to the Arabs I was designated as *Hazzan*, or Jewish rabbi. However, trusting to my lucky star, and to my belief that since the occupation by the French a radical change had taken place even in the most inaccessible parts of Morocco, I preferred to retain my khaki uniform and my colonial helmet; and thus I passed among the Jews of the Mellah as a *Haham*, or Jewish scholar from Paris, and among the Mussulmans, who judged from the reception I was given by the Jews, for a sort of *Consu-el-Yehud*, or consul of the Jews. The Berbers of the interior cannot conceive of a European otherwise than as invested with the title of consul.

I reduced the numbers composing my caravan to a minimum: A Berber *sahib* of the court of the Sultan named Si-el-Mahsub, whom Sidi Madani had put at my disposal; a Jewish servant and interpreter, speaking Berber, named Yamin (Benjamin), a native of Tagmut in the mountain Glawa; muleteers and *settats*, horsemen of the local tribes.

The caravan preceded me to Ulad Manzur, where I was to join them together with Madame Slouschz and

M. Israel Danon, making the trip in an automobile, placed at my disposal by M. Israel of the French Chamber of Commerce. Our machine made the fifty kilometers in two hours, and we came to the little town of Sidi Rahal, the point of departure for caravans starting for Demnat or the Glawa district. The route lies through the immense plains of Tenseft, passing by many palm-groves and the multitude of *weds* by which the plain is intersected. As the mountains appeared we came upon the *zawya* (cloister) of Sidi Rahal, situated on the bank of the river.

The town of Sidi Rahal has three distinct parts: a *zawya* sacred to saint Sidi Rahal, a *Kasba* surrounded by a wall, which holds the court of the Kaid and which shelters several hundred Arab-speaking Mussulmans, the place being part of the territory of the Zemran Arabs, and finally, the *Mellah.*

This Mellah forms a village apart. It has one large street and several miserable alleys. The houses are of baked mud. The Kaid Sidi Mohammed ben Zaghn received us with every courtesy. He offered us cakes which I was much amazed to see were real Jewish honey-cakes, just like those eaten in Russia on Purim.

"Who made these delicious cakes?" I asked the chief.

"Oh, my wives, of course," he replied.

This was not true, for soon afterwards I learned that he had sent among the Jews to get these cakes and sweetmeats. The world over it is only the Jewish woman who knows the secret of these delicacies.

Being eager to continue our journey, we has-

tened to the Mellah. At our entrance, our attention was arrested by a huge dung-heap that had accumulated through the centuries until it had assumed the proportions of a small hillock. Recently, I am told, they had been forced by the Kaid to remove it, ostensibly for sanitary reasons, but in reality to provide manure for a landowner of the plain.

The women came up to me with complaints against this Egyptian slavery. A negro *muhazni* (soldier) struck one of them with a sabre in our presence.

"Since when have Mussulmans struck women?" I exclaimed, but the brute continued without shame. The men who were digging in the hill of dung left their work to implore me to aid in delivering them from their filthy toil.

Escorted by a gesticulating and shouting crowd, preceded by the rabbi and the leading Jews of the place, we entered the Mellah. As soon as we came to the place where we were to be entertained, a rich merchant's house which we found fairly comfortable, we were offered cakes and the inevitable *mahia*, and then we were told in detail of the wretchedness of the Jews in this spot, which the French had not yet occupied. They told how, at the death of Mulay Hassan in 1895, their houses had been pillaged and their wives and daughters led into captivity by the Rehamna and the Sraghna; that later the Sultan Mulay Abd el-Aziz had granted them an indemnity of fifty-two thousand *duros* (the *duro* is equivalent to a

dollar), but that they had never been able to collect more than two thousand four hundred.

According to the Jews of this region, there are located there the tombs of the seven rabbis who came to convert the inhabitants to Judaism. A whole cycle of legends is woven about the activities of these Jewish missionaries.

Since any documents in regard to the matter are lacking, I made the following abstract of the state of the Jewish population. There are 562 Jews in the Mellah, 214 adults and 348 children.

The following list of trades of the Jews in Sidi Rahal will give the reader some idea of the occupations of the Jews of central Morocco. There are:

40 merchants of woolen goods, cloth, etc.,
7 perfumers,
10 jewellers and armorers,
57 cobblers,
13 carpenters,
12 blacksmiths,
8 vendors of oil,
4 vendors of grain.

There are 45 widows and orphans, and 25 beggars in the town. Sidi Rahal has a Talmud Torah, but there is great need of a school.

Leaving Sidi Rahal, we continued our journey across the plain, which became rougher and rougher as we went on. After some twelve kilometers our machine stopped in the garden of Tazert, or Dar el-Glawia, a strong castle of imposing aspect, buttressed against

the mountain side. We visited the superb gardens, and the little Mellah, the houses of which, about twelve in number, are built right against the side of the mountain and partly cut into the rock, thus being somewhat troglodyte in character. These Jews are very poor and miserable.

Our automobile stopped at last some five hundred meters from the village of Ulad Manzur, and here we waited for the caravan to come up with us. The women of the Mellah surrounded us, clad in holiday garb of red silk, greeting us with cries of *yu-yu*; the men, being bolder, came right up to us and kissed our hands. Thus we made our triumphal entry into the little village with its score of mud huts. We made our halting place in an olive-grove along the Wed Tessuet, a lovely spot; and here the people brought us *cus-cus*, fowls, olives and figs. Having partaken of this repast and looked about the place, my companions returned to Morocco, leaving me alone with my native servants to start upon my dangerous journey. I spent the night comfortably upon the terrace of one of the houses of the village.

The most striking feature about this picturesque village is the fact that the majority of its Jewish population follow agricultural pursuits. Of its twenty-five families, fifteen or sixteen live by cultivating the soil. The strip of land which they cultivate and which extends about a hundred and fifty hectares along the river bank, belongs to Arab proprietors of Zemran, to whom the Jews are forced to pay an annual tribute. They raise wheat, barley and fruit, above

all figs and dates. A few years ago these peasant Jews were overrun by the Sraghna tribes.

On the following day we left Ulad Manzur, with its hospitable population. Passing along the banks of the deep flowing river Wed Tessuet, we came in an hour's time to the olive groves of Tidili, in the country of the Zemran Arabs. Here, as in some of the other Arab districts, there is a collection of small, fortified dwellings in place of the forts (Kasbas) of other regions. Thus the forty families of the Jewish population are divided among six such dwellings.

We continued our march toward Demnat across the plain, which began to give way to a plateau sloping towards the east and surrounded by *jebilet* (lines of hills). In about an hour we pitched camp in the olive groves opposite the village of Dra'a. Here was pointed out to us the white *qubba* (mausoleum), erected over the tomb of the Jewish marabut, David Halevi, who is held in high veneration in these parts. He was a rabbi from Jerusalem who, after a pious journey through the Atlas, reached this outpost of Tenseft, and one Thursday evening, feeling himself weary and about to die, he hewed a tomb out of the mountain side and lay down there never to rise again. His servant raised the alarm among the Jews of the place, and ever after the saint was the object of profound veneration among Jews and Mussulmans alike. The former tried to gain possession of this holy tomb, but were prevented by Joshua Corcos, who had the square white structure erected which now rises above the tomb.

Near Dra'a we were overtaken by a very violent storm, and when it passed, we beheld the vast olive groves that stretch upwards to Demnat. The way became even more difficult, and we had to scale heights and descend into deep ravines. At last, after two hours of hard marching, we were rewarded by the fairy-like picture of marvellous gardens washed by hundreds of rushing streams. We were at last among the beautiful groves of Demnat.

CHAPTER IX

DEMNAT AND THE GREAT ATLAS

In the midst of green slopes, noisy with the sound of rivulets, there rise on a hill-top the half-ruined crenellated walls and towers of the fort of Demnat. The gates of the fort are on the south-west side and open upon a place which bears the name of Kaiseria, situated between the Mellah and the Kasba. The latter, which is in the eastern part of the fort, has a rampart of its own, which has been almost demolished during the repeated revolts of the tribes. One passes along rows of badly built houses, of which many are in ruins. All the houses are set in gardens. On each side of the Kasba rises a mosque. It is an ordinary Berber settlement built in *tabia* (baked earth) or in brown *pise*. It is an outpost of the Shleuh country of the southern Berbers. The people of Demnat speak the Berber language; they are white-skinned and have fine features. As we passed through the town the people looked at us curiously, but without any sign of hostility or arrogance. The Jews who had accompanied us to the gardens escorted us as far as the courtyard of the Kaid's residence, but there, to my great chagrin, they were dispersed by the guards.

I was conducted into the castle. Soon appeared the Kaid and his *amin* (intendant). The young Kaid, Si Abdmalk, the son of Si Madani, is a beardless boy of

some twenty years, white-skinned with a weary but delicate face. He was obviously at a loss how to receive me, for the letter of introduction from his father, Si Madani, which was sent by a *rekas* (special courier), did not come till later. However, we kept up a continuous exchange of *Baraka Aloific* (Greeting to Thee) and *Hamd le-Allah* (Praise be to God), for the Moroccans are, next to the Chinese, the most effusively complimentary people in the world. At last we took friendly leave of each other, and I was conducted to the magnificent garden of the Calif Jelali. I was installed in a vast room at the end of a lovely colonnade. The garden, which is of vast extent and which overlooks the whole of the surrounding country, was entrancingly beautiful. One servant brought me rugs, and another came with the *muna* (gift) of the Kaid, which consisted of a goat and a dozen chickens, in an immense vessel with a conical cover. Mimun, the Sheik of the Mellah, had received orders from the Kaid to see to it that I lacked nothing. He brought the *Shohet* with him, who prepared the food.

The Mellah of the Jews of Demnat occupies a place situated at the northern end of the little town. M. Foucault stated that at the time of his visit the Jews did not have a Mellah, but "mixed freely with the Mussulmans, who treated them exceptionally well." However, after the death of Mulay Hassan, revolts broke out in the country. The Jewish homes were looted and the synagogues burned. They were then granted the present Mellah, but that too was pillaged

a few years ago at the time of the deposition of the Sultan Abd el-Aziz.

The great synagogue and scores of houses are in ruins till this day. At the present time there are only ninety-five Jewish houses in Demnat, which has a population of about sixteen hundred.

At the entrance to the Mellah there is a large open place, from which a massive door gives upon a small narrow street, along which are ranged the small, tent-like booths of the Jewish smiths. The Mellah is very much alive. The houses are poor and dirty, and there are no toilets. One man, who had had a toilet installed, was so proud of it that he insisted on showing it to me.

An earthen terrace serves at once as a dumping-ground and a courtyard, which is a place of work and recreation for mules and donkeys and women and children. There are ten-year-old husbands and wives dressed in clouts of unrecognizable hue.

The Jews of Demnat are merchants, artisans and money-lenders, but they excel as jewellers and smiths. Many of them have gardens which are cultivated by Berbers. They are all rather fond of the *mahia*, which they manufacture from the excellent raisins grown in the country. Besides this they produce an excellent wine, the best I have tasted in Morocco.

They are very proud of their town which, they believe, is one hundred years older than the city of Morocco or Marrakesh. Their arrogance and lack of manners have moved the people of Marrakesh to compose a Hebrew satire, ridiculing their pretentions.

What the Hara of Jerba is to the Jews of Tunis, the Mellah of Demnat is to those of Marrakesh.

The Jews of Demnat are under the protection of Corcos, who has obtained for them exemption from all taxation. There are several rabbis in Demnat, fair Talmudists, who believe themselves the superiors of the rabbis of Marrakesh.

Few historic traditions have been preserved at Demnat. Among the seven synagogues of the Mellah, there is one which bears the name of Ajama el Moriscai or the Spanish, which proves that Jews observing the Spanish ritual must have penetrated to Demnat. The other synagogues are native. Of the rabbis, Simon Ancri and David Darin are fairly well acquainted with the Hebrew literature of the middle ages, and even with some writings of the Haskalah.

Mention of the Jews of Demnat is first made in the seventeenth century, when Rabbi Solomon Amar of that city wrote the book "Mar Deror." Since then the city has produced several other rabbis and writers. Before the sixteenth century the community was Judeo-Berber. At the northeast end of the city there is a hill covered with the ruins of what was the ancient Mellah. There are also the ruins of an ancient city called "Behalo."

On the side of the hill is the ancient Jewish cemetery. The inhabitants of the Mellah make pilgrimages to an immense boulder which, they say, covers the ashes of a legendary saint, Musa bu Ussair, venerated by Jews and Berbers alike. This saint seems also to be known under the name of Mu-el-Moshifia (father of nourish-

ment), and a number of miracles are attributed to him. It is obvious that as at Unila and at Sefru this boulder was worshipped as a fetich long before the rise of the legend which made it the tomb of a saint. One thing is certain: rabbinical records make no mention of the name Demnat, but use instead the name "Ksur Musa."

In the garb of a native Jew I visited the prehistoric grotto of Iminifiri, situated about an hour's walk to the east of Demnat in a picturesque valley which is the subject of many marvellous legends. In this grotto, through which rush subterranean streams, genii and phantoms have made their home, and at stated seasons they reappear to terrify the living.

In the afternoon of the twenty-first of August we left Demnat, and set out in a southwesterly direction toward Tasemsit. The road is plainly marked, and we had the guidance of Sheik Mimun and of a Jew of Tasemsit, besides a number of muleteers. We left the gardens and went along a spur of the pine-covered hills. As we went along, the route became more irregular, and after four hours darkness overtook us on a peak or Kasba of the Ait Lahman which dominates the valley of Tasemsit. Here we camped near a chateau of the *nadir* (representative) of the Kaid, who also received me as if I were a royal emissary or consul. In this country all Europeans travelling under the protection of the Sultan are so treated.

At dawn we descended near a dried up water-course, and at the foot of the hills we came to the *zawya* of Si

Bu Rdam in the valley of Tasemsit, which is watered by a narrow river.

We passed Friday and Saturday in the miserable Mellah of the settlement. This Berber district, out of the beaten path of travel, is deserted and poverty-stricken. The twenty houses that make up the tiny Mellah shelter only about two hundred Jews, artisans and peddlers, who lead a wretched and primitive life. The houses are made of rammed clay, and the roofs are all joined together, so that they form a sort of terrace which runs the length of the whole village. The inhabitants promenade along this terrace, as New Yorkers do along their roof-gardens. The Mussulmans of the zawya exploit the Jews mercilessly.

The Mellah is set apart from the Berber village, which is situated on a cliff in the midst of olive and fig trees. Cut in the rocky side of the cliff are the famous grottoes of Tehuna, which extend for several kilometers. It is a whole city, with its colonnades, its corridors and its vast chambers, glowing with a thousand colors, and in the midst a great cataract dashes down. A Jew of the village told me that these grottoes were constructed by Shedad be Ad, the hero of ancient Arabia, of whom mention is made in the Midrash.

In Tasemsit I saw an instance of the survival of the statute labor of ancient Egypt. A large clay house was being built by the Israelites for the brethren of the zawya. The former had to do the building, while the latter furnished the clay bricks and all other necessary building material. But woe to the Jew who should rashly aspire to own such a house himself: happiness

and comfort are for the Mussulman only. The Jew must content himself with a miserable hut and with filthy garments, while he must submit to all the humiliations which the malice and meanness of the Mussulman can contrive.

Six hours' journey through a rough and stony region brought us to Enzel, where the Kaid received us cordially and offered us the hospitality of his castle. This is the first town in the country proper of the Glawa, while all the other towns through which we had passed were simply tributary fiefs peopled by strangers. The Kaid, who is the son of the Kaid Glawa, is a negro, for Sidi Madani, who has many black wives as well as white ones, has thirty sons whose colors vary from the Circassian whiteness of his son, the Kaid of Demnat, to the ebony blackness of the Kaid of Enzel.

The Mellah contains twenty houses and two hundred Jews. In Tugana, near Enzel, there are two Mellahs with some forty Jewish families, of which several cultivate the soil.

After some difficulty we procured mules and continued our march. The trail became increasingly difficult—it zigzagged in perilous curves up the mountain side; here and there we came across dwarf pines, fig trees and junipers. After struggling along for twelve meters, we attained a point from which the whole magnificent panorama of the mountains of Glawa was visible.

We continued the ascent, mounting higher and higher above the little Berber villages clinging to the

lower slopes of the mountains amidst gardens and patches of cultivated land. We were now well in the Berber part of the Atlas mountains. The heights are arid, but, with the tenacity and industry which characterize the Berber race, the peasant has triumphed over nature and, by his special systems of irrigation, has redeemed scattered patches here and there and turned them into gardens and orchards. On these terraces the Berber grows barley, maize and sometimes vegetables for himself and his beasts.

Only towards the end of the river do fruit-trees grow, especially figs and walnuts. The mountain climate is not suitable for palm trees.

We continued our journey through a rocky region, crossed a sandy river bed and mounted a woody slope. The journey now lay through the wildest scenery. We left the narrow path leading to Adrar-n-tri and plunged into the valley which winds along the Rdat. After struggling along for six hours we reached the ramparts of the Kasba of Sheik Ali, which stands on a green eminence cut off from the surrounding country by rushing torrents. We knocked; a servant opened and admitted us into a large, vaulted room. An old man, with a pleasant face and gentle eyes, received us. His son read the letter from the Kaid of Marrakesh which I gave to the Sheik, and gave us a very friendly welcome. The Sheik Ali rules the whole of this region, including Tagmut. Zarkten is the capital of this district, which is the birthplace of my servant Yamin. Yamin's home was Tagmut, and it was with

the utmost impatience that he looked forward to our arrival in that town.

Yamin was a typical Jew of Atlas, even as Tagmut is the typical Berber mountain village. His real name was Benjamin, but he was called either Yamin or else Habib, on account of his close resemblance to a brother of that name. My own name for him was Yamin-u-Semol (ימין ושמאל, right or left) on account of his obstinacy and mental clumsiness. He certainly had none of the intelligence and finesse of my friend Rabbi Mordecai of Tripoli. He was dirty, discourteous, shameless and quarrelsome, but he was not an ignorant man. He spoke Arabic, Berber and a most curious variety of Hebrew. Like all Jews of the Atlas, he shaved his head, leaving only a forelock in the middle. He possessed orchards in Tagmut, but his real profession was that of a maker of mill-stones. He himself cut the huge round stones. He worked at this difficult trade with the same alert energy with which he climbed mountains as my guide. He was not spiteful or untruthful; above all he was not a coward, on the contrary he was exceedingly courageous. But when he got drunk, as he did rather frequently, he was perfectly intolerable. As soon as we entered a village he disappeared in search of *mahia* (whiskey).

Tagmut, his native place, is one of the most picturesque towns in the Atlas. There are between two hundred and fifty and three hundred Jews in the place, among them many Talmudists. The rabbi is a Moroccan, who has lived in Palestine. The com-

munity is very ancient. In a picturesque spot near the village is the white tomb of a Palestinian rabbi—Rabbi David Alshaqar, a saint whose name is held in veneration throughout the whole region. I also paid a visit to the ruins of the ancient Mellah Imassin, now deserted. Opposite this Mellah is the ancient Jewish cemetery. The Jews of Tagmut say that there is an ancient family of Cohanim buried in this cemetery. The lower part of the cemetery is the most ancient; here I found no inscriptions, but in the middle part I came across the following inscriptions, the first Jewish ones that I discovered in the Atlas. The text follows:

NO. 1.

Died, Aaron the son of	מת אהרן בר
Iidr, in the year	יידר בשנת
5234 (1474). May	הרל"ב תהי
His death be an atonement.	מיתתו כפרה

NO. 2.

Died, Mina	מתה מני
daughter of Califa	בנת כליפת
in the year	שנת
5242 (1482)	הרמ"ב

NO. 3.

Died, Mimun,	מת מימון
Son of Harun	בן הרון
In the year	בשנת
5255 (1495).	הרנ"ה

The writing is ancient and irregular. The script is a mixture of Hebrew and Arabic.

It is obviously the writing of a very ancient people, which has inhabited this country from the earliest times.

The Jews of these parts celebrate their festivals among the graves of their saints. A lamb is slaughtered and roasted on the spot and the meat is eaten and washed down with frequent draughts of *mahia*. The junketing goes on till morning, and generally finishes with squabbles, if not with actual fisticuffs.

A toilsome mountain road leads from Zarkten to Teluet. We followed the Wadi Rdat past a number of Berber villages. One of these villages is called Iddz, and contains a number of Jewish families. From there we mounted continuously by trains that grew steeper and steeper, until we came to the spur of the Glawi, some two thousand six hundred meters high. This spur forms a gigantic natural wall, a bulwark which guards the vast country of Eastern Morocco. Along this road the caravans pass from the interior to the plain of the North and West. This spur is cleft into two parts, through which we passed to the other side of the great Atlas. We crossed with difficulty a stony path, below which lay the valley of Teluet, a naturally fortified place twelve kilometers long and four kilometers wide. This valley is a little world in itself, with its own little hills, valleys, rivers and villages. Four of the villages in this valley have Jewish quarters.

Here the trail is very dangerous; in winter the

avalanches come plunging from the heights, bearing huge stones along with them, and at no season is the traveller safe from the brigands who infest the region. In a ravine I myself encountered a "blue man" of the desert, one of those veiled, blue-clad fanatics who have sworn death to all Rumi (Christians).

Nor are these the only dangers lying in wait for the traveller. If the Kaid of Teluet happens to be at odds with any particular tribe, he makes it a habit to clap into prison any merchant unlucky enough to come to Marrakesh while the feud lasts. In fact, at the time of my arrival in Teluet, there were ten Jewish merchants from Askura who had been imprisoned because their Mussulman patrons had refused to recognize the authority of the Kaid of Teluet.

I was the guest of the Kaid in his castle, which is one of the strongest in the district. He is the nephew of Sidi Madani, the Kaid of Marrakesh. In Teluet, a veritable eagle's nest among the mountains, I saw at close range the life of the Berber chiefs.

There are some eight hundred Jews in the city (forming a third of the population), and they occupy four Mellahs. The Berbers call them Ait Musa, the Tribe of Moses, while the Jews call the Berbers El Philistin (the People of Palestine); the Jews explain that they call the Berbers by this name because tradition has it that they came to the Atlas region from Palestine at the time of the destruction of the Temple.

Near the castle of the Kaid lies the Mellah of Imanin. Here lives Hazzan Moshe el Drai, intendant

to the Kaid and Sheik of the Jews. He is the only Jew who possesses a beautiful house with a garden, for gardens are a forbidden luxury to the rest of the Jews. R. Moshe is a type of the court Jew which Samuel Romanelli knew in Morocco in the eighteenth century (in his book "Massa Ba-Arab"). A clever Talmudist, he has a cunning and subtle mind. He plays up to every caprice of the Kaid, and knows the art of making himself indispensable to the courtiers. He is very friendly with the black eunuchs, who are so influential in Mussulman courts, and he is even admitted to the Harem. Thanks to the place he has won for himself at court, he has been able to monopolize all the export trade, dividing the profits with the Berber chiefs, and he often comes into conflict with other Jewish merchants, who fear and detest him. An undying feud exists between him and his rivals, who only wait for the moment when he will fall from grace to exact their revenge and take his place. Reb Moshe persuaded me to turn to account my little medicine chest, and I played the court physician with considerable success. The Kaid and many of the nobles availed themselves of my elementary medical knowledge.

Yet, not all his influence was able to shield Reb Moshe from the jealousy of the Berber nobles. I asked him: "Why are your children dressed so poorly, when you yourself wear such good clothes?" "I do not want to give my Berber neighbors any cause for jealousy," he replied. "They do not believe that Jewish children ought to be well dressed."

Half an hour's walk from the castle is the most important Mellah of Teluet, that of Ighilbein. It is composed of about fifty houses and contains about three hundred Jews. In the Mellah there is a synagogue with columns, the best specimens I had yet seen in the mountains. More than once have the Mussulmans sought to destroy this building, and it was only saved by gifts of money to the nobility and the clergy. The Sheik of Ighilbein is Jacob Aknin, who was in those days a dangerous rival of Reb Moshe and has since supplanted him.

There is a third Mellah at Taugimt and a fourth at Tazert on the road to Unila. Near the last is the tomb of the saint Aron Bu Hazera, of the family of the *Zaddikim* of Tafilet, who died at Teluet in 1901. His tomb has become a place of pilgrimage.

The Jews form quite an important part of the population of the Atlas. In certain villages they form a third and in others even a majority of the population. They are very courageous, travelling fearlessly through the most dangerous regions and maintaining relations with all the surrounding tribes. No one knows the country or its people better than they. They buy wool, oil, nuts, almonds and cereals from the natives, and often enter into a sort of partnership with the Kaids and the chiefs. They are not only merchants; they are also smiths, weavers, tailors, tanners, etc. Some of them travel about as healers, a cross between sorcerers and tellers of tales, working on the imagination of the natives, who are all illiterate.

The Jewish women of these parts are often quite

pretty. In the temperate climate of the mountains they retain their freshness much longer than the women of the plains, but premature marriage ages them before their time. They are slender, graceful and white-skinned in their youth. They have the social freedom which is characteristic of Jews who live among the Berbers. Their dress is similar to that of the Mussulman women. They wear two kerchiefs, one covering the hair and the other bound around the head. The hair is covered with henna, and the face is powdered. On Saturdays they smear henna on their eye-brows, their noses and the tips of their fingers. They cover themselves with glass and coral beads, and they wear pieces of silver suspended from the neck, enormous collars of amber or coral, bracelets and huge earrings.

The Jews of Teluet are among the purest types, though the Berbers of the same region have an admixture of negro blood. The former are lithe and well-built, with fine and mobile features, with black or grey eyes and aquiline noses.

Like the Berber, the Jew wears a black mantle (*khenif*) with a large orange oval on the back, or else a *haik* (robe) of white wool, black shoes and a black cloak. His head is shaved, leaving only a forelock of hair. On the whole the Jews of Teluet enjoy a fair amount of freedom, for which they are directly dependent on the Kaid. However, the latter subjects them as well as the Mussulmans to the most exorbitant taxation.

The Jews of the Atlas are, on the whole, a healthy

and vigorous lot; sickness is almost unknown among them, and they are astonishingly hardy. But they are treated with contempt by their neighbors. The meanest and most insignificant negro treats a Jew as though he were an outcast.

Their social and moral standards are primitive. There is hardly any Jewish scholarship among them, and the rabbis do nothing but recite from the Zohar. However, I was startled to find at Tazert a number of young fellows who had taken up talmudic studies, and their one regret was that they could not find a master to direct their work.

I visited the ruins of an ancient Mellah named Inseln, near which is the old Jewish cemetery of Teluet. I found there several inscriptions dating from the fifteenth century. I reproduce the oldest of them here:

Died Rabbi Jacob	מת רבי יעקב
In the year five	בשנת חמשת
Thousand two hundred and for(ty)	אלפים מאתים ואר[בעים]
Year. May his rest be in Eden.	שנה נ"ע

Another inscription dates from the year 5302 (1532) and bears the name of rabbi Massud and a rabbinic formula נפטר instead of the Jewish Arabic מת.

I took away four tombstones from the cemetery, and on my return left them with Reb Moshe, whose guest I was for the Sabbath. An incident at the house of Reb Moshe showed me that the Jews of Teluet are

no less superstitious than other African Jews. By an unhappy chance the little three-months-old daughter of R. Moshe was found dead the night of my stay there. The women at once accused me of causing this sudden death. They said that Jinns—evil spirits—had been brought to the house with the tombstones and that they had strangled the little girl.

The master of the house managed to control his grief, and sought by every means to calm the others and to assure me that he put no belief in their talk; but I was none the less distressed. It was impossible to convince these people, whose very religion is a superstition, that neither I nor my poor tombstones had anything to do with it.

The mountain Jews of Glawi have been in the country from ancient times, as I have proofs to show. Although they are very hospitable, they are very hot-tempered, quarrelsome, and show themselves to be devoid of gentleness or of any spirit of solidarity. This lack of unity will certainly not stand them in good stead when the political conditions of the country change. Abuse of *mahia* is as common here as in the other parts of Morocco. The cult of the dead plays an important part in their social life. At Teluet I saw for the first time among Jews the practice of placing a cruse of water in the tomb of a relative, after the ancient Phoenician fashion, while elsewhere they merely burn oil in a hole scooped out of the tombstone.

The country has been denuded of its resources, and the lack of money of the Kaid is the greatest evil the

Jews and Berbers have to suffer. Thus, some time ago, the Jews of Unila, unable to comply with the Kaid's request for sixty duros, were condemned to three months' slave-labor. The whole population, including the women, the children and the rabbis, were sent to cut wood in the forests.

Having lived so long in this one place, the Jews have accumulated a number of legends and traditions which are profoundly interesting. Nothing could be more beautiful than the following legend, which I heard in Teluet:

"Under a mighty crag to the east, through a rocky valley, flows a little river with green banks. Out of the river reed rise nut-trees and near the river lie the ruins of an ancient city—Inseln. The old men of the country say that long ago a great Jewish city stood there, with a huge market-place to which there came merchants and travellers from every part of mountainous Morocco. Every Friday there streamed into the city sixty thousand (and some say six hundred thousand) mules, bearing travellers, who came thither for the Sabbath rest. Among these travellers were learned rabbis and Jews of note. Nowhere was there seen such affluence, *zedakah* (benevolence) and love of the Law as in this city. And most distinguished among those that loved charity and feared the Law was the pious woman named Saadat, daughter of Askelah. She was as beautiful as Esther and as good as Sarah. The whole week she sewed white mantles and white girdles, and in six days she fashioned with her hands forty garments for the Sabbath. And when

Friday afternoon came and the market was done, she took the garments and went and sat down by the cross-road which was on the way from the market to the city, and there waited till the learned rabbis and the pious merchants should pass. And when they came by she would address them sweetly: 'My lord, may it please thee to come and pass the holy Sabbath in our house. My husband is learned in the Law and is pious, and I am the servant of all those that love the Torah.'

"And no one could resist this pious appeal, no one refused to pass the Sabbath in a house so hospitable and governed by so generous a hostess.

"Thus spoke the pious Saadat, and one after another these guests came to her house, till there were forty of them gathered there, sages and pious men. Then the lady of the house bade her servant lead these guests to the ritual bath near the river. There they performed the *tebilah*, and donned the white robes which the pious Saadat had prepared with her own hands during the six days of the week. Thus they returned from the bath, refreshed and robed in white, and they all gave praise that they had been permitted to partake of the peace of this household.

"And when the sun went down over the mountains of the west, the pious hostess made the benediction over several lamps; then the vast room filled with light, which shone on the white robes of the forty guests and on the happy faces of the host and hostess.

"'Then they began to intone the hymn of the meeting of the 'Angels of Peace,' the 'Angels of the Sab-

bath,' and then the real peace of the Sabbath descended on the house."

Many generations, many centuries have passed away; but the memory of the pious Saadat has outlived the city in which she dwelt. Until about forty years ago the people of Teluet went in pilgrimage to her tomb. The women kept her tombstone white, and lighted oil lamps on it. Then the very tombstone disappeared, and with it went for ever the happiness of the Jews of the valley.

Tuelet marks the limit of the domination of the Kaids, in fact of any government whatsoever. Beyond begins what is known among explorers as the Blad-es-Siba, the Morocco of anarchy.

Two hours and a half from Teluet is the village of Unila. In these parts begins the serfdom of the Jews. Though they have been liberated by Sidi Madani, the Jews are everywhere, except in two places, attached to the house of their *Seyyid* or Berber overlord. They are, moreover, subject to the most extortionate demands. There are twenty Jewish families at Unila, and among them a number of Cabalists. The oldest legible epitaph in the place dates from the year 3470, and bears the name of Eleazar ben Rabbi Abraham. The local saint of Unila is called Sidi Felful; he is in reality the genius of the river Felful, a survival of a religion of fetichism, but this does not prevent the Jews from worshipping him as their own saint. Near Felful are numbers of gigantic grottoes, about which the natives tell the most wonderful legends. According to them a queen sleeps

in these grottoes, and around her are many servants and fabulous treasures.

The roads from Teluet to Warzazet are not as rough as those of the Glawi, but travelling is none too easy along them. We descended the plateau which slopes towards Tafilet in the east and Dra'a in the west. The country is very similar to that through which we had already passed, and although it is an arid region, here and there a river forms an oasis. These oases are from one hundred to three hundred meters wide, but sometimes attain a width of as much as a thousand meters; here the banks of the river are covered with gardens, which the Berbers cultivate with the utmost care. There are long lines of Berber houses, attractively and solidly built; they are better constructed than any other houses in the Arab country. They have an architectural style of their own, which has been commented on by M. de Segonzac.

Beyond this point, the place of the village is taken by the Kasba, or Berber stronghold, within the walls of which the whole population is sheltered. Often these Kasbas are of the most imposing dimensions. At Ait Aissa, where I passed the night, there were thirteen Jewish families, who told me that they were well treated by the Sheik.

From Ait Aissa the roads become steeper and more difficult and are, in addition, infested by bands of robbers. During my stay in Ait Aissa two Jews and one Arab were assassinated. Travelling in an easterly direction, we reached the valley of Tikirt, which is dominated by a Kasba the Sheik of which is Hmadi

el Haj, the absolute owner of the Mussulman population. There are some two hundred and forty Jews in the place, occupying twenty-four houses. They are all the serfs of the old Sheik, who in turn is the vassal of the Glawi; they seem to be well treated by their master.

Three and a half hours' journey from this place brought us to the great oasis of Warzazet; this is the last halting-place between Marrakesh and the desert which leads to the Sus.

No European had ever set foot in Warzazet before my coming. I had travelled thus far in khaki and the pith helmet of the European traveller, despite the advice of Sidi Madani and M. Corcos, the head of the Jewish community of Marrakesh. It was as a European that I continued my journey, and I can state with much satisfaction that thanks to the effect of the occupation of Marrakesh I was everywhere well received.

In this district, in a very interesting cemetery, I found a number of inscriptions, some of them centuries old. It is a strange thing to be in possession of Jewish documents relating to a country the very name of which is unknown.

In the oasis of Warzazet there are twelve Berber villages (the Ait Warzazet) and five Mellahs, of which the most important is that of Temesla. The Jews claim that their cemetery is more than two thousand years old. (This tradition, I believe, rests upon a false interpretation of a funerary inscription which bears the date in letter-numbers: שנת ו'ה'ט'ו'ר'

ה'ר'ב'י'ע'י'). The real numerical value of these letters gives us the year (523=1763).

It is certain, however, that there was a Jewish population here in the fourteenth century, that is to say, at the time of the first Merinides. The oldest legible inscription bears the date 1440. The text follows:

I.

Died.....son.....	מת.....בן
(year) five thousand	(שנת) חמשת אלפים
and two hundred (1440)	ומאתים

The lettering is square, primitive and almost archaic.

II.

This is the tomb of Mas-'udah daughter	זה קבר מסעודה בת
of Moses, died in the year	משה מתה שנת
5253 (1493)	הרנ"ג

III.

Died Rachel daughter (of Joseph..?)	מתה רחל בת (יוסף...?)
in the year 5261 (1501).	בשנת הרס"א

IV.

Died Samuel	נפטר שמואל
Son of Isu	בר יסו
In the year	בשנת
5289 (1529).	הרפ"ט

The name Isu is interesting.

In this obscure country, I had perforce to play the rôle of a physician, for the inhabitants were convinced that every European was of necessity a physician. And then I was a Haham, so that there were two good reasons for my being able to work cures. I used my medicine chest to the best of my ability to restore to health those who came seeking my aid. More than anything else, I advocated abstention from whiskey, in which the Jews of the region over-indulge. The Sheik himself fell down dead drunk in the room I occupied in the castle, while paying me a visit.

The extortions which are so frequent in these Mussulman countries have forced more than a hundred Jews of this oasis to leave their native place. One of the leading Jews, named David, recited a whole Odyssey of his wanderings when he was forced to leave home. When the authorities came to seize his house and his possessions, he fled and wandered for a long time in the desert, and finally reached Marrakesh, where he placed himself under the protection of a European power. Many other Jews followed his example, and no one dared to attack them. It is to be hoped that the French government will occupy this country soon.

In Warzazet I met rabbis who are well instructed in the Torah. In this region and toward the southwest, the study of the Torah is receiving serious attention. However, the Jews of the oasis, who are about eight hundred in number, are greatly in need of a school. There are several well-to-do Jews at Warzazet, but in a country where taxation is unregulated and despotic,

and where the authorities are always in need of money, existence is very precarious.

During my stay in Warzazet, I managed to obtain the release of two Jews who disobeyed the law which required that all subjects of the Sheik should live within a certain radius of the castle. Apparently these people preferred to put a little distance between themselves and their worthy protector.

Another interesting incident took place during my stay. One day the Jews came and slaughtered a goat before the gates of the Kaid's castle. This is a sign of submission and supplication, which is respected by every chief in Morocco. The Jews had come to petition the Kaid for the restoration of their water supply, which had been cut off by the heads of the village. By making the *debihah* (sacrifice), the Jews won their point and the water supply was restored.

Illness overtook me at Warzazet; it was impossible for me to mount my mule without fearful pains; but I was determined to continue my journey, though the Jews of the city did everything in their power to dissuade me. I left a testament with my host and, dressed as a rabbi of Jerusalem, I set out across the farther Bled, the most dangerous part of Morocco. This was the only course I could follow for, ill and weary as I was, I would have found it harder to retrace my steps than to venture into a new and unknown country.

My European costume had attracted too much attention on the part of the natives. What amused them most was the pith helmet; they simply would

not understand how such a head-gear could be worn. The village children used to run after me—three and four hundred at a time—till it really became a nuisance. The Kaid and even the head of the Jewish community of Temesla told me repeatedly to change my costume. In the end I donned the clothes of a rabbi of Jerusalem, which I had specially brought with me from Marrakesh. The reader will wonder why it was this particular costume that I chose, rather than that of a native. First of all I cannot speak Berber, and the only foreigner that the natives would have expected to see was a rabbi of Jerusalem. As I speak Hebrew, I was very well fitted for that rôle. I put on a richly colored caftan, yellow slippers (in doing which I rather invited criticism, in as much as Jews are not supposed to wear slippers of yellow, though mine were of a more sober color), and over all a sort of gandura.

Thus accoutred, I continued my journey. It was not a comfortable dress for climbling mountains on mule back. As I am not tall, the robes dragged after me, which was very painful. My memories of this detail of the journey are not very pleasant, and I think I would have done better to retain my European costume.

While I was passing through the district called Ait-Bu-Dlal, I heard sounds of rifle-firing in the distance. In this part of the country there is a continuous state of warfare between village and village. Then I penetrated into the rich oasis of Askura, which I explored in nearly every direction. It is undoubtedly

a country with a future. At present it is just an obscure and almost inaccessible corner of Morocco, about three hundred kilometers away from Marrakesh. This oasis really forms an entire province, almost five hundred square kilometers in area; it is drained by three permanent rivers, and by hundreds of *seguia*—Berber or Arab canals. There are beautiful gardens, planted with fig trees, orange groves, pomegranate trees and magnificent citron groves. The region reminded me (to compare it with a country which I know much better) of the magnificent gardens for which Jaffa is famous.

Askura is not really a Berber country; it is in fact an off-shoot of Arab country in the Berber lands. The Arabs are splendid riders, while horses are almost unknown among the Berbers. There are one hundred and twenty Kasbas in the Askura, somewhat smaller than the Kasbas of the Berbers, each of which shelters ten or fifteen families. There are also eight small Jewish Mellahs, of which the most important are those among the Ulad Usta and the Ulad Muhammed.

The Jews assert that the Arabs—who, surrounded as they are by Berber tribes, are themselves in a half-hostile country—treat them better than they do the Berbers. But *are* the Jews better than the Berbers? I do not know. The impression made on me by the reception given me by Hazzan Moshe—rich Jew as he was—was a very bad one, and despite the poor health I was in, I refused to accept the hospitality of these Jews. I was sick, and the welcome given me was

unbrotherly—unfriendly. I was forced to take my rôle as rabbi very seriously—for very obviously they did. Eight days later, when I returned from my dangerous journey into the Dades, the whole village waited for me on the edge of the desert; they kissed the hem of my mantle and cried; שוב מחרון אפך, "Let thy anger against us be forgotten: Forgive us."

I pardoned them all the more gladly as I had just returned safely and in good health from the most dangerous part of my voyage. They arranged a *se'udah* (banquet) in my honor, which lasted through most of the night—to the great joy of Yamin, who emptied pitcher after pitcher of *mahia*.

From Askura we proceeded to Imassin, which is a typical Berber valley, some four hours' march in length. Along the river which runs through the valley are stretched the Berber gardens and the splendid Berber houses, with their four towers and their sculptured façades. The inhabitants of these villages are all Shurefa, or descendants of Mohammed. They are sacred persons, belonging to the Moroccan family of the Idrissites; their language and civilization are Berber, though they do speak a bad Arabic. At Imassin there must have been about fifty houses, containing between twenty and thirty people each. There are no Jews here, the Shurefa themselves being excellent merchants and exerting a profound economic and religious influence on the outlying districts. The Jews do not wish to settle at Imassin—they told me—because there is no Jewish cemetery there, and they believe that the absence of tombs and of the

ancestral shades which haunt these tombs would be very bad for them.

Since there is no recognized authority in this anarchical country, the Shurefa have made it their business to protect travellers. I carried about with me a letter to the Sherif, Mulay-el-Hassan, a sort of saint or tradesman who goes about preaching the Koran, and it was he who helped me to continue my journey as far as Wed Dades, the farthest point in my travels. The nephew of the Sherif conducted me—though not without warning me of the perils to which I was subjecting myself—to the Kasba of Klaa. In order better to conceal my identity, we travelled at night. The Sheik Ibrahim, head of the district of Klaa, gave me a very cold reception, and sent me to the Jews of the place—there were two or three families there. To crown everything, my most trusted servitor, Si el-Mahzub, had disappeared. He was very much in the habit of disappearing when he was most wanted. Whenever I wanted to penetrate into some interesting grotto—he disappeared; whenever I wanted to turn aside from the road for a while—he was gone. With the refusal of the Sheik Ibrahim to receive me, I found myself in a difficult and even dangerous situation. The state of war still existed between the two villages, which stand face to face. I heard the crack of rifle-fire. I thought it best to set out with Yamin, another Jew, a native of Klaa, and a negro horseman towards Tililit, which was the supreme goal of my journey.

The negro horseman who accompanied us kept on

predicting catastrophe. The Ait Atta, a warlike and fanatical tribe, had come to Tililit, and despite my costume of rabbi of Jerusalem, the cut of my beard betrayed me. After a quarter of an hour's marching we came to the cemetery of Tililit. The attitude of my black servitor was anything but reassuring. He insisted that the horsemen we had passed on the way to the cemetery had recognized me, and that I was running into terrible danger. I sent for the rabbi and the chief citizens of Tililit, while I myself remained in meditation over the tomb of the sainted rabbi Abraham. I had to keep up my rôle to the last detail, for I saw that I was surrounded by people who were watching me very closely from ambush. At last came the rabbi, assuring me that their master would surely protect me. They themselves were slaves, but their master would protect their guests.

Very close to the gate of the town I was halted by two natives, who laid hold of my caftan. Then one of the Jews said to them: "This is a rabbi from El Kuds (Jerusalem)." The Berbers are very ignorant in matters relating to the Koran and to Arabic learning; they did not really know what this El Kuds was, but they finally let us pass.

We went into the village and, in my rôle as Jew, I had to get off my mule before the *qubba* of a holy Mussulman. Yet I heard hostile cries around me of "Nazrani!" ("Christian!"). I had been recognized as a European.

There are about forty Jewish houses in the place, occupied chiefly by jewellers; with their wares they

travel to the utmost parts of southern Morocco. The houses look very poor, and even the little *zla* (synagogue) of baked clay struck me by its bareness.

At Tililit begins the country of Jewish serfdom—one might even call it slavery. Everything which the Jew possesses belongs to the Kaid, who has the right of life and death over his subjects. He may kill them with impunity; he may sell them if he so wishes. The price varies from 40 to 100 *duros* per family. But it must be said here that for the last five years there has not been a single case of execution in all the Dades. For the loss of all his rights the Jew is given absolute security, which his master assures him even at the risk of his own life.

A Jew who desires to marry must buy his future wife from the Seyyid to whom her father belongs and who is the sole master of her fate. The Jews of Dades are not required to bear arms on behalf of their masters. It is at Ait Warzazet that the region of Jewish warriors commences. Among the Ait Atta (I encountered several of them at Dades) the Jews of the various villages employ the leisure moments which their masters allow them, in making war among themselves. Thus I was told that the year before, two Jewish villages, each one assisted by its Mussulman neighbors, had warred against each other for three months and that twelve had fallen in the fray.

The most singular thing about the Jews of Dades is that instead of wearing a lock of hair in the middle of their head, as do the other Jews of the region, they

wear it over their forehead, in commemoration, they say, of the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Dades river is the most important in the basin of the Wed Dra'a. Along this basin are scattered a number of Jewish communities, who live under the same conditions as the Jews of Dades.

The study of the Torah is very extensive among the Jews of this region. Their manners are gentler than those of their coreligionists of the mountains, and they are very hospitable and very deeply attached to the community. Child marriage is their greatest evil, and one sees eight-year-old wives among them.

After having exchanged a few friendly words with those who had come to see me in the *zla* of Tililit, I took the road again. On returning, I took a bath in the fresh and limpid waters of the Dades river, and as if by a miracle I felt myself restored from my long illness for all the rest of my journey. At Klaa I was threatened by the people who should have protected me. They tried to convince me that they did not believe that I was a Jew; they told me that the horsemen of the Ait Atta were in pursuit of me, and my guard told me that a hundred warriors were lying in ambush for me. He entreated me to flee before sunrise on Saturday, but I would not listen to him. I felt that I had to complete at all costs my researches, which were of such paramount interest for Jewish history.

What I was most interested in, next to seeing the Jewish serfs, was the verification of a very curious historical episode. Towards the fifteenth century,

certain members of the Spanish family Perez who, like the Saqali Cohanim of Debdu, claim to trace their descent direct from ancient Jerusalem, came to settle in Marrakesh. The story of how they established themselves in this region is told by two seventeenth century authors in the prefaces to their works published in Berlin and Leghorn.

The head of the family was loath to establish himself among the Jewish natives, and to mingle in the life which was so rude and primitive. Being very wealthy, he purchased outright from the Sultan of Marrakesh part of the Dades region. Here the members of the Perez family installed themselves in a fortified castle, which they called Kalaat Ait Perez (now called Klaa). Here they made a kind of little state for themselves, and, in exclusively Jewish surroundings, devoted themselves to commerce, horticulture and the study of the Law. In time they multiplied and became an entire tribe, so that they were forced to add to their domain by the acquisition of the site of Tililit. These two towns remained autonomous Jewish centers till the accession of Mulay Ismail.

During the latter part of the seventeenth century, and even in the early years of the eighteenth century, the literary activities of the rabbis of Dades gave them a reputation which spread as far as Europe. Thus in the year 1665, a member of the Perez family published at Berlin a work entitled "Perah Lebanon" (the Flower of Lebanon), republished in the same city in 1713, where he gives the details of the colonization of Dades by the Perez family. The story is repeated

by a member of the same family in his works published at Leghorn.

After that we hear no more of the Perez family at Dades. But by diligent inquiry I was able to unearth a number of details concerning the last days of this Jewish colony. I had the satisfaction of discovering the site of the ancient family Kasba which, besides its name of Klaa, bears that of Kalaat Ait Perez. I also discovered the cemetery which contains the graves of various members of the family. A certain part of the cemetery is devoted to the rabbis of the family, another part to the women and children. From among the inscriptions which are still legible, I copied six, which cover a period beginning with the first part of the seventeenth century and ending with the eighteenth. I left the original inscriptions in the Museum of Rabat, but one of them is reproduced below:

Died.	1 נפטר.....
Son of Jacob ben . . .	2 בן יעקב בן...
Al-Perez (departed to his eternal House)	3 אלפרץ שלב"ע
Five Thousand three	4 חמשת אלפים ושלש
Hundred and seventy	5 מאות ושבעים
And five years (1615)	6 וחמש שנים
Of the creation. May his soul be enfolded in the folds of life.	7 ליצירה הנצב"ה

The other inscriptions are similar in form to this one; the last one bears the date 5540 (1780), which seems to have been among the last years of the history

of this Jewish republic. The name of the family is sometimes written "Perez," and sometimes "Al-Perez."

At one time, I learned, the Perez family dominated the roads of the Dades and made war on the Berbers. I also learned a number of other details relating to the saints who are buried in this region, the most celebrated of whom appears to be rabbi Judah Perez.

One legend tells that once, about the middle of the eighteenth century, a marriage feast was held, at which all the members of the family came together. In the midst of the festivities an enormous boulder came crashing down from the mountain side and killed most of the guests. From that day onwards the family diminished in numbers and in power and was finally broken up.

By an irony of fate the descendants of the Ait Perez, who inhabit two tiny Mellahs in Dades, are wretched serfs. The study of the Torah is all that remains to these unhappy representatives of a once powerful tribe.

I left Klaa on a Sunday, prepared for a dangerous journey. I had taken various precautions, among them the one of sending a letter through a native Jew to my friend the consul Nissim Coriat, who had been my host at Marrakesh.

Before I reached Imassin, one of my guards suddenly turned on me and attempted to kill me for whatever money I had. Yamin threatened him in the name of the Kaid, to which the fellow replied: "I don't care a

pin for that Bu Issardin (father of mules)".[111] This is an excellent instance of the respect in which the head of the Makhzen country is held.

Somehow we managed to reach Imassin with whole skins. The Sherif Mulay el Hassan congratulated me, saying: "You are indeed a brave man! You have not only penetrated into the Dades, you have actually come back!" We took a very friendly leave of each other. At Warzazet, on my return journey, I discarded my rabbinic vestments and became a European once more. On the road I twice narrowly escaped being caught by brigands, who were lying in ambush. Near Marrakesh I met with two Arabs who had been set upon by brigands, robbed and wounded, half an hour after I had passed the place.

I was well satisfied with my five weeks' journey of discovery; it had not been without its dangers and discomforts, but it had enabled me to come into contact with peoples almost unknown to the civilized world, and to gather a wealth of material relating to the Jews of the mysterious Atlas.

[111] An allusion to the Kaid's confiscation of the mules of the natives.